

SOLDIERS AT SEA

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE EVERYDAY LIFE
AND EXPERIENCES OF A BATTALION OF
SOLDIERS ORDERED ABROAD.

BY

LOUIS KILLEEN

"And oh, the little warlike world within !
The well-reeved guns, the netted canopy,
The hoarse command, the busy humming din,
When, at a word, the tops are manned on high."
CHILDE HAROLD.

WARD & DOWNEY
12 YORK STREET COVENT GARDEN LONDON

1893,

P R E F A C E.



THIS picture of a Soldier's life, on board of one of Her Majesty's troopships, going abroad must be taken for what it is intended. It does not pretend to any literary merits, nor does it in any place lay claim to any originality of sentiment or view.

It is simply a faithful record, during the short period which it embraces, of daily experiences, somewhat out of the ordinary, transcribed from a rough, pencilled diary, kept under rather trying circumstances at

sea, and brought to completion amidst even greater difficulties on land, before my regiment had got properly settled down in its new station.

It may interest my possible readers to know, while adding a further insight into the "*roughing it*" in the ranks, that this little book has been prepared for the press, in queer out-of-the-way corners all over our new barracks, during the intervals of leisure, snatched between frequent calls of all-engaging military duty in the garrison of Malta.

L. K.

MALTA, 15th May 1890.

Since writing the above, after barely a twelvemonth's stay in the Mediterranean, my regiment was ordered to India. We

came out on board the same troopship, H.M.S. *Malamer*.

On the long voyage out to India, where each man has a considerable time to remain at sea, the arrangements for the general comfort are much more complete and satisfactory than in the case of the shorter trip.

Some of the little hardships mentioned, in the simple desire to speak the truth, and which every true soldier accepts as simply incidents of his career, to be *grinned at* and *borne* for the time being, were, in fact, to a great extent removed. In Part I. of the little book before the reader, the *impressions* and experiences of a regiment, composed mainly of young soldiers, at sea, who had never before been abroad, are faithfully

recorded, day by day. In the Second Voyage the soldiers were more at home with both sea and sailors, and in a better position to bear ready witness to the many manly and excellent qualities of their gallant comrades-in-arms—the men who composed the crew of H.M.S. *Malamer*.

L. K.

PUNJAUB, INDIA, *7th June* 1891.

TO THE SOLDIERS
(OF ALL RANKS)
OF THE BLANKFORD LIGHT INFANTRY,
WITH WHOM THE AUTHOR HAS SERVED,
AT THEIR REGIMENTAL DEPÔT,
AND IN BOTH BATTALIONS OF THEIR REGIMENT,
AT HOME, ABROAD AND ON THE SEAS,
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS
Dedicated
IN ALL RESPECT AND SYMPATHY
BY
A COMRADE-IN-ARMS.

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SOLDIERS AT SEA.

CHAPTER I.

GOOD-BYE TO ALDERSHOT.

Wednesday, 12th February 1890.

UP this morning about six o'clock. I do not know when *réveillè* sounded, if it sounded at all, but I have a fairly distinct recollection of hearing "Orderly Sergeants on the double" go as early as five—clear proof that something unusual is taking place. Very glad I was able to use the "Bunk,"¹ as it not only secured me a proper

¹ The little room, either adjoining the barrack-room or "boarded off" inside one, used for sleeping and working purposes by the non-commissioned officer in charge of the barrack-room, is commonly termed a "bunk." As a matter of fact, my little sanctum was a "room," not a "bunk," as, though only a few yards from my barrack-room, it was not actually attached to it, and was originally intended for the use of a married sergeant, who would also have possession of

night's rest but also saved my being hunted out of bed, hours before it was really necessary to rise. Lost no time in setting my batman, who also slept here last night, cleaning up the place, so as to be able to hand it over to those from whom I obtained it, in a fit and proper condition. Returned the bed I had borrowed from the Fire Brigade over the way for the night *con molte grazie*,¹ and sent off Huntingdon with various odds and ends of things, no longer of any use to me, to Corporal V., of the Military Foot Police, who, as a married man, may turn some of them to account. My bunk, used for purposes of privacy and study during the daytime, was unoccupied for some time previous to my entering into temporary possession. It is a great comfort to have a place of this kind, to retire to at one's will. At my first station, Fermoy, and also at the dépôt, I rented a room outside barracks, in the town, where I used to spend most of my leisure hours, returning to my barrack-room at night.

At 8.45 a.m., the battalion "fell in" for the last time on the square, where it had so often the room adjoining, belonging to the medical authorities. It was very kindly placed at my disposal for purposes of work and privacy by the medical officer in charge. I had used it during the day-time for nearly six months before we left Aldershot.

¹ It must be remembered that the day before a regiment leaves a station, everything in the nature of barrack-room furniture and utensils, including the tables and beds, are returned to stores. Some blankets are left out for the men's use on the last night, and these are collected the first thing in the morning.

paraded before and after those long and harassing Aldershot field-days, for the creditable part it had always played in which, the regiment received great praise. So quiet and steady were the men, that but for a certain solemnity of demeanour observable on their part, and which showed that they fully realised the real and potential meaning of the term "Foreign Service," this last parade of the First Blankfords in these isles, looked almost as ordinary an affair as a "fall in" for an every-day Adjutant's drill. Yet, everybody knew that the battalion itself was leaving England for a term of probably sixteen years, and that anyway this century would not witness its return to these shores. Not one single man absent! As the reports were collected the officer commanding each of the eight companies was able to sing out "present," as the adjutant trotted by. The last regiment I saw leaving Aldershot presented a very different spectacle. On that occasion there was a very considerable number of absentees, and a very strong contingent, indeed, of drunken men and prisoners. Here all was order and decorum. The weather itself was quite in keeping with the occasion. A calm, cold, grey morning, with no rain or wind, more like the opening of a day at the latter end of spring, than one six weeks after Christmas.

While the strains of "Then you'll remember me" are being poured forth by the band to the right front of the column, a clatter of hoofs

is heard, and the Lieutenant-General commanding the division, surrounded by his usual suite, appears upon the scene. At a good smart pace, Sir Evelyn, dismounted, walks down the opened ranks, making his last inspection. To the assembled officers, he afterwards addresses a few soldier-like words of commendation and farewell, and then taking up a side position, gravely returns the salute of each company, as the battalion marches past him in column of route to Aldershot Town Station. Suddenly all is noise and uproar, and, as we march off our square on to the main road, a deafening cheer is set up by a crowd of red-jackets, who have taken up their position, for the express purpose, on the Queen's Parade.

"Three cheers for the Blankfords!" was responded to by our fellows, with deafening cries of "Cheers for the Somersets," etc. All tongues seemed to be now loosened and *gaieté de cœur* became the order of the day. When our men were not enthusiastically responding to the shouts and huzzahs from straggling groups of men of other corps along the road, they were singing snatches of popular songs and giving every possible manifestation of good humour, if not of strict sanity. As we passed through the Liverpool lines, found W., corporal in a regiment, just arrived here, whom I met for the first time last night, waiting to see me. Lucky fellow! His colonel has definitely promised to send up his

name the very day he gets his next stripe, and give him the full rank of that stripe, a *sine qua non* before recommendation for a commission, as soon as he gets his certificate. W. told me he never saw such a pretty sight as the picture presented by the regiment this morning. The long stretch of snowy-white helmets, with Indian "puggarree," almost as far as the eye could see, along the straight, bleak, level road to Aldershot. He, himself, had been anxiously scrutinising each section as it passed, and was afraid that he had missed me altogether, just before we met. Said good-bye at the top of the hill leading down by the back of the Block Barracks. At drill on the square of the latter were the recruits of the "Royal Scots." Once more came a cheer from our fellows, for men of a corps which, by force of circumstances, they had seen very little of. Indeed, by this time there was no repressing our somewhat violent manifestations of "Peace and good will towards all men," and this kind of thing lasted all the way through the town to the station. It was not quite easy amidst all the din to distinguish which of the alternative airs, "The girl I left behind me," or "Auld Lang Syne," was occupying the attention of the musicians of the "Somersets" and "Buffs" who played us out.

At Aldershot, my company (F) had to wait some little time while the company in front filed into the train, and one train went off, laden, on

its way, before it came to our turn. Had a shake hands and *bon voyage* from Mr D., who does not come out with us, but goes to the depôt, and from our old quarter-master. The same good order which characterised the opening of the proceedings might be now observed at this the close, as far as Aldershot is concerned. Little or no confusion occurred during the entraining of the regiment, and the men told off to their various carriages quietly took off their helmets and valises, and smoked and talked good-humouredly all the way to Portsmouth. Some envied their invalided and time-discharged "chums," left behind in England; others were glad to see a little of life in foreign parts, and many did not care a straw whether they went to the Depôt, to Malta, or to Jericho. It was, they philosophically remarked, "all in their seven" —*years*, understood. The general consensus of opinion, however, was with Shakespeare, that "if it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well that it were done quickly," and the cries of "roll on the *Malamer*," occasionally called forth so far back as last summer by a fatiguing day on the Fox Hills or in the Long Valley, were this time heard in sober earnestness of wish and not in irony.

CHAPTER II.

H.M.S. "MALAMER."

ABOUT two o'clock, some three hours after leaving Aldershot station, we steamed up along the jetty at Portsmouth. The windows of the train were now in great demand, and the oft-repeated word *Malamer* was heard on all sides.

Outside in the water, parallel with the train, lay the subject of so many hopes and fears, the well-known troopship, with its great white hulks, and its motto, "Heaven's Light our Guide," plainly legible from the carriage window.

Bustling about the disembarkation pier, "on fatigue," were the men of B company, who left Aldershot, yesterday, in charge of the baggage, animate as well as inanimate, for the married women of the regiment accompanied them.

Before many minutes had elapsed, we were all drawn up in line by the side of the train, and were being told off into messing parties by a colour-sergeant of the Marines. No. 14 mess of F company fell to my lot, and I had nineteen men committed to my charge for the voyage.

Each non-commissioned officer, in turn, marched his party on board the ship, and found out as best he could the particular place allotted to him and his men therein.

Picture to yourself party after party of armed landsmen in full and heavy marching order, now muttering imprecations on the Army and Navy and everything else, filing laboriously along the upper deck, down the companion ladders to the waste deck, down again to the main troop deck. Down, down, down! If you want a recipe for discomfort and extreme personal inconvenience, here it is:—Get up, in the marching order “rig” of a soldier of the line and take you on board a man-of-war.

You will find the companion-ladder experience positively delightful. Not able to bend your head and cast your eyes about with quite sufficient freedom of motion to avoid lurking dangers, you must trust to your good feet for deliverance. Be particular that you wear the regulation ammunition boots, with their iron-tipped heels, and let the afore-mentioned iron come in contact in a rude succession of bumps with the slippery brass-bound steps of the ladder-stairs, and there you have what you wish for.

I have said you must trust to those feet of yours, but, of course, you have still your hands. It is true that in your right hand you are holding a more or less heavy rifle, but that is a mere trifle of detail, for with your left you can, of course

now and then make a frantic grasp at the bannister as you descend. By dint of sliding, slipping and rolling, sometimes all three combined in one graceful mode of progression—now and then gently propelled by the involuntary pressure of the muzzle or perhaps the butt of a rifle against your sides, or maybe your head, you find that, like the brook, you could go on for ever, were it not for the friendly restraint imposed upon you occasionally by your bayonet, which, in a firm but playful manner, occasionally catches you between the legs. If you are not contented with this recipe for general uneasiness of mind and body, you had better go quickly and consult a professional man!

Within about an hour after our getting down on the main troop-deck, we had managed to get ourselves and our belongings into some order.

All along the wall stood the rifles in the racks; and overhead, touching the ceiling or rather the floor of the deck above, were hung up our valises and accoutrements, presenting a very threatening aspect to those passing to and fro beneath. Indeed, on the troop-deck a free, unimpeded passage, at all times, between point and point, is practically an impossibility. At early morning one finds all the space outside the rope fully occupied by grumbling soldiers, unslinging their hammocks, while outside, in the narrow passage, using terribly strong language,

"Phrases such as camps may teach,
Sabre-cuts of Saxon speech,"

as they grope their way in a somewhat uncertain light, are their comrades carrying them away. Each man's hammock has to be rolled up neatly with the blankets folded inside, and given in, an hour before breakfast, to the Naval Warrant Officer in charge of the hammocks, who issues them at 7.30 in the evening.

No sooner are the hammocks "marched off" than the tables are let down and the forms pulled out, and every inch of space in the body of the deck is fully accounted for, while outside the ropes cries of "Gangway." "Look out there, d—n you." "Where the —— are you going to?" "You —— owl! Keep your eyes open and mind my toes." "Scaldings!" etc., may be heard as the orderly-men of each mess, with cans of hot tea, grope along from the kitchen to their companies, past the rest of the battalion coming back from the wash-house, or making their way to the breakfast-table.

The deck, for a couple of hours after breakfast, does become comparatively clear, for then "all the troops" have gone above, with the exception of the "Swabbers" and the orderly-men, who are busily engaged washing plates and tables, and generally tidying up for the morning inspection of the naval authorities. Poor Tommy Atkins finds himself subject to precisely the same discipline—just as much "messed about," as the gentleman himself would express it—on sea as on land. In addition to being subject, as usual, to his own

officers and non-commissioned officers, who, by the way, find themselves just as much "at sea" as he himself does, he has to give satisfaction direct to ever so many sons of Neptune, whose precise rank the poor landsman is not able to distinguish at once.

"Mind who you're speaking to!" "Do you know what I am?" "You say 'Sir' to the sergeant-major in the Army, don't you?" and such snatches of speech are heard from morning to night, as some glorified blue-jacket, with all the solemnity he can muster, announces to the rather preplexed private the interesting fact that he is a Warrant Officer.

On this subject it may be remarked, that the ordinary seamen in the navy accustomed to see their petty officers work with their own hands—as is quite necessary on board a ship—side by side with the undistinguished blue-jacket, treat them with nothing like the outward deference enacted by regulation from Tommy Atkins towards his "non-coms." It almost seems as if these naval "authorities" when they get soldiers under their charge, endeavour to make up for their deficiencies in distinction by insisting on the full meed of respect from our men. However this may be, the fact remains that on a troopship, the blue-jackets at home on the wave, and "up to the ropes" of the ship, as they are—are very much disposed to lord it in a most high and mighty manner, over the red-coated land-lubber.

"Those d—d soldiers want servants to do everything for them," I heard a petty officer interject, as he ordered a poor "Tommy" in the agonies of *mal-de-mer* to reapply himself to his forsaken sweeping brush. If, however, the sailors at home on their ocean wave, occasionally affected to look down upon the mere military, there is no doubt that the soldier, in his heart, feels never so contented with his selected branch of the service as he does on board a troopship.

The private in his smart uniform, with really a minimum of hard manual work to do, as is shown clearly by the shape and colour of his hands, feels more than contented with his lot, as he looks on, on board ship, at the blue-jackets, in their bare feet, running in and out of all the corners of the ship, and climbing up the dizzy rigging.

"Ours is a gentlemen's life compared to theirs," said one fellow in my hearing.

"Yes," said another fellow, "they have everything that is bad with us and a lot that we haven't, and no chance of slinging their hooks, when they get fed up with it."

"The beautiful ocean!" cried one fellow in bitter sarcasm.

"D—n the beautiful ocean," replied another.

"It's all very well to sing fine songs about it on shore, after you have been trapped into it, before you were old enough to know what life is, and see that it is too late to begin all over again."

When sea-sickness was at its height during the

second day in the Bay of Biscay, I told some fellows, by way of joke, that it would probably come out in "Orders," that men desirous of registering their names for service in the Royal Marines, could do so at once and take their chances of being permanently transferred to that corps, before we disembarked at Malta. A spontaneous cry of "Here's out of it," greeted my remark.

It will be seen that Tommy Atkins, always on excellent terms with Jack Tar on shore, is disposed to resent the blue-jacket's patronising airs at sea, and though he admires the latter for the agility with which he climbs up the ship's rigging, bare as to his big brown feet, yet, on the whole, blesses his stars that he is a land-lubber for more reasons than one.

Pour revenir à nos moutons. Our first day's dinner on board the *Malamer* came to us somewhat in the way of an agreeable surprise. Most of us were fully prepared for culinary horrors, intensely nautical in matter and form, and were consequently rather pleased to find ourselves sitting down to a hot meat dinner, very nearly, if not quite as good, as the ordinary mid-day barrack-room meal. It is true that I should decline to make a statement, on oath, as to whether the meat aforesaid was intended to be beef or was generally known by the name of mutton, but for my part—not professing to be a connoisseur in such matters—I am often utterly unable to make a satisfactory diagnosis on the subject, even in the case of the regulation barrack-room

fare. Every man who went "through the mill" of the *Malamer* will agree with me in saying, that taking our peculiar circumstances into consideration, the "messing," at first, was rather better than we expected. For three days after we left England we had hot-cooked dinners, which were eatable. To anybody brought up with the ordinary decencies and comforts of life, and accustomed to properly cooked meals, in proper quantity and right proportions as to matter—I say nothing of the serving up—the very most that can be said, at present of the soldier's dinner, is that it is eatable. It can rarely be said to be quite palatable. Of course it is, if one can afford it, though not then at all times, possible, to make private arrangement with regard to one's meals, and at most grocery bars—splendid regimental institutions—one can find obliging people, who will try to make things as comfortable as possible for one in this way.¹

With regard to this matter, fellows accustomed to genteel life and delicacy of living, can only look forward to their becoming members of the sergeants' mess, where, barring luxuries easily dispensed

¹ I must here mention that in the soldiers' opinion, the system of having two large cook-houses, or even three, is radically bad. Instead of having the cooks of several companies all working together under one roof, each company in a regiment should have its own separate cook-house; I think that this would certainly be an improvement. It would be better still, if the orderly man, detailed daily in each room, himself acted as cook, not for the whole company, but for his own room alone; he would then be personally responsible that the dinners of the men belonging to his particular room were properly cooked, also, that each man got his just and

with, everything is very good in matter as well as form. Under our present system, as good a one as perhaps can be had with such numbers to cook and cater for, things, though they may be improved, can hardly be made perfect, in spite of official inspections, frequent experimentalising, and Committees of the House. At the same time it must be borne in mind, that in spite of occasional grumbling—*pace* the newspaper-writers on the subject—there can be little doubt that, for perhaps the majority of men, who enlist into the army, the "living" is infinitely better than that to which they were accustomed in civil life.

I endeavour to give here nothing more nor less than a bald statement of facts, with no attempted colouring of any kind, and mention this matter, merely *apropos* of the messing regulations on board the troopship, which, by contrast with the normal state of things, can be better pictured to the mind.

After our third day at sea, we said good-bye to the hot dinners, and betook ourselves to tinned meats cold. It is true that "Salt Junk" is rather in the nature of an abomination, and "Fanny" proper share. In connection with the subject, I may mention that all soldiers agree, that they never fare so well in this way, as they do when away from barracks on an outlying guard. In this case the men of the guard, before mounting in the morning, individually draw their own rations uncooked from the regimental cooks. After they have arrived at their guard, the non-commissioned officer in charge details one of their number to act as cook for the day. Though this does not exempt him from the necessity of doing "Sentry-go," in his turn, he always gives satisfaction in cooking.

Adams" is, on the whole, objectionable, while "Preserved Spuds" are anything but tasty, yet, somehow or another, they commended themselves sufficiently to the sea-breeze appetites of such of our men as were not actually sick, as to secure every day a very fair representation of the messing at table. I found, to my great astonishment, that, without having any Benchers to satisfy, *I ate my dinners* no less than five times out of eight. I put this on record, as I am extremely proud of the achievement, and shall never cease to brag about it, when I remember that, when I first crossed the Bay of Biscay as a first-class passenger on board a well-appointed Liner, replete with luxuries, I never was once able to summon up sufficient courage to go down to dinner. Not only was the flesh weak, but the spirit was anything but willing. When I say that each man had a pint of somewhat pungent beer,¹ with the hops present and visible therein, to wash down his dinner with, and tea of practically the same quality as the barrack-room article, but minus the milk, to accompany the bread of the evening meal, I think I have nearly finished my detailed account of the messing arrangements on board the *Malamer*. I have here crowded reflections on experiences which cover the whole eight days' sail into my account of the first day's proceedings on board, for the simple reason that we had little to do the first day, beyond consuming

¹ The issue of beer to soldiers at sea has quite lately been stopped, and lime-juice substituted.

our rations and getting into our hammocks, previous to which feat of gymnastics, of course, a little lecture, accompanied by practical demonstration was given by the old Indian warriors, of whom we numbered a few. One of these I "warned" for orderly man of my mess for the entire voyage, and I often rejoiced that I had him to warn, as he was, I believe, the only man of my lot whose equilibrium was never once upset by sea-sickness.

To resume the detailed account, we found the embarking of the baggage at such an advanced stage of progress on our arrival, thanks to the energy of our advanced party, that, within two hours after our arrival, everything was duly stowed away on board. By this time our Glengarry caps had also been packed away with our equipment, and we had all ensconced ourselves in the sea-caps served out the day before we left. Now for a description of the sea-cap. First of all, it is a woollen article ; to get an idea of its shape, picture to yourself a skull cap, with half a stocking attached to it, which appendage can be pulled down to such a degree, as to rest against the skull-bone, or can be allowed, as is generally done, to flutter about in the breeze behind the head. It all depends, I presume, upon whether the wearer is of a sternly practical or a mildly artistic turn of mind.

They are excellent things, these sea-caps, and sticks to one's cranium like glue, let it blow as it likes at sea. After a shower of rain, however, one's head is inclined to object to them. As I fancied

somehow that I looked particularly villainous in the sea-cap, after ascertaining that the change added even to my comfort, I substituted a smoking-cap in my possession for the article of wool, served out to us from the stores at Aldershot.

All day long we lay anchored in Portsmouth Harbour, and night found us still stationary. I shall never forget that night.

In spite of lessons, theoretical and practical, from the old Indians amongst us, on the art of slinging hammocks, on this his first night on board, as might be expected, Tommy Atkin's achievements in this way did not reach the stage of perfection.

It was about six o'clock in the evening, not later, that the battalion began to go to bed "by numbers."

To the non-military mind, I am afraid the facetiousness, peculiarly Atkinsonian, of this phrase will be hardly understood.

In Part I. of the Orthodox Red Drill Book—Field Exercise—in the part devoted to elementary squad drill, each practice is first done by numbers. The recruit is first taught to stand to attention, to stand at ease, to turn about, and even to salute by numbers.

It is the same in the musketry practice :—"On the command 'Ready,' make a slight turn to the right on both heels, carrying the rifle round with the body, right foot to point to the right front, eyes to look to the front. On the word 'Two,' advance the left foot, moving the body with it, ten inches to the left front, viz., six to the front, and eight to the

left, toes to point to the front; at the same time bring the rifle to a horizontal position at the right side, with the small of the butt just in front of the hip, grasping the stock with the left hand, near the point of balance, etc. On the word 'Three,' placing the thumb of the right hand inside the loop of the lever, open the breech by a smart forward jerk, take a cartridge between the forefinger and the thumb, etc."¹ Page after page of this apparently necessary rigmarole has to be learned by *nous autres*, the non-commissioned officers of the army. We sing it out in monotonous, parrot-like fashion to the yokel, joined within the last six months or so, and thereby clearly prove that we know what to do ourselves, and that we make him do everything, even to the minutest detail, in the manner laid down by the book, with the sacred *imprimatur* of the Horse Guards on its title page.

When our friend, the yokel, has learned to do everything perfectly by numbers, he begins to work, judging his own time. Instead of giving the word of command thus:—"Right about turn"—(followed by a move of the yokel's legs); "two"—another move; "three" (final execution by yokel), we give him the simple word of command—"Right about turn." He is by this time supposed to be far enough advanced in his professional studies to be able to turn about in the proper military manner,

¹ All this detail of instruction has lately been changed, and for the better. The new Explanation is much less verbose, and much more intelligible.

clearly showing each independent motion, as taught him gradually by numbers, without requiring the shouting at him of the words, "Two," and "Three," after the command, "Right about turn." It is now a question of doing things not only thoroughly, but quickly, and of art's concealing art in doing them. The soldier goes to the Drill Book for a lot of his every-day-life expressions, and when a fellow does anything in a slow or stupid manner, he is recommended by his comrades to do it by numbers, before attempting to do it all at once. A recruit with an enormous appetite will be, for instance, recommended sarcastically to eat his dinner by numbers.

Our fellows would certainly call the manner in which we went to bed on the first night on board the *Malamer*, as "going to bed by numbers." Instead of a fellow's getting, in a quick, not to speak of a graceful manner, into his bed, he executed about forty intermediate movements before ultimately finding himself, with the whole movement completed, lying on his back inside. First of all he would seize the side of the hammock with the right or left hand, as the case might be, and with the other make an attempt to hold on to the beam overhead. This preliminary motion completed, if the hammock did not swing round and necessitate his relinquishing his grasp and returning to mother earth, or rather our equivalent for it, he would begin hoisting himself up.

It was about ten to one that, before he hoisted

his body far enough up to bring his legs near enough to the surface of the canvas, so as to be able with one swift move to swing them both inside, that in the ascent, he unwittingly deposited said legs on the face of a man, who, after considerable labour, had succeeded in stretching himself in the hammock underneath. Needless to say, a scene would be the result, and our friend would precipitately descend, to begin again at the beginning.

"Where are you, Dick?" cries one friend to another.

"I'm not anywhere yet that I know of," would be the answer.

"Who's that something-or-other fool shaking that hammock? Look here, be quiet, or you'll swing me out of mine."

"Get down, you something-or-other something. Do you know what you're doing?"

"Wait till I get up, you something-or-other. I'll punch your something head for you! Can't you see you're standing on my chest?"

"Good Heavens! Here's a fellow coming down with his boots on," cries some terrified man, who, in his despair, has lain himself down to sleep on the floor underneath all the hammocks.

"Any fellow down below there? Sing out, or I'll be standing on your something-or-other, something-or-other heads. I've had enough of this kind of thing, and I'm going down to sleep on the floor."

"What's the good of talking to me about it? I tell you I couldn't help it."

"It's all very well to say that, after you've smashed a fellow's head, and put your foot in his mouth. I don't know what they want with clumsy something-or-others like you in the army."

"I declare, if young Jack Something hasn't fallen out of his hammock, and pulled down half a dozen rifles along with him on the top of old So-and-So. Oh, you should have heard old So-and-So growling. He swears he'll kill him in the morning."

"He'll draw his club money in the morning,
To the sexton he's given warning,"

quotes another fellow, from one of those ephemerally popular ditties of the canteen stage.

"Where's my chum?" shouts out one fellow.

"Are you in, Jack?"

"Who's that to the right of me? Stop kicking, you fool."

"Perish me pink, if there isn't a fellow here, somewhere behind me, asleep and snoring like a—"

"Wake him up, youngster. Tell him he's not supposed to be driving pigs to the Muddy Saffron Market now. He's on board the *Malamer*."

Then perhaps a voice is heard from the darkness of the other side—

"What do you fellows call yourselves? You're supposed to be soldiers, but you're worse than kids going to school for the first time."

"Yes," says another fellow, rocking himself to and fro, and purposely bumping up against the men on his right and left. "This reminds me of the time when I was a baby, and my old woman used

to rock me asleep in the cradle." Then feelingly—
"Ah, if my poor mother only saw me here, would not she be put out!"

"Yes," says another, with would-be facetiousness.
"If I hadn't gone and struck the coachman, and got cut off by my governor, I wouldn't be a swaddy on board the *Malamer* now, going off to Malta."

"To think," says another man, "that you have to put up with all this for a shilling a day!"

"Advantages of the army!" shout out half-a-dozen in the same voice, quoting from the post-office recruiting notices.

"It's all for the Queen," reflects another man, "but the worst of it is that she knows nothing about it. I'll bet she doesn't know my something-or-other name, now, and I'm one of her soldiers."

"Roll on 1893, when my something-or-other seven's in, and I'll watch enlisting again."

"Do give us a chance there, and let us, at any rate, *try* to get to sleep," plaintively cries an advocate of quiet.

"I never felt so happy since I had the measles," answers another.

"Here, you fellows, that's quite enough of this kind of thing. Let me have no more of it."

"All right, Corporal; good-night!"

"Did you hear me telling you to shut up—that man in the left corner. If there's another word from you (what's your name?), I'll move you out of that pretty quickly," and so on *ad infinitum*.

I shall never forget that first night on board the *Malamer*.

I make a practice, and have always done so, of sternly repressing the *worst* form of bad language in my barrack-room, and—if I may be allowed to say so—with success. At first a fellow, especially when only a lance-corporal, takes upon his shoulders intense odium in doing this kind of thing, and it is very unpleasant to find some senior non-commissioned officer in the room who, perhaps, is quite as bad in this respect as the men themselves, to some extent tying one's hands. You find, perhaps, too, that at first the men will grumble in a sickening, silly manner in your hearing, but without committing themselves by referring to you personally by name or otherwise, or saying anything that they could be well brought up for, thus always showing that they can be cautious in their discontent when they see they have to deal with a non-commissioned officer of character, who would suffer no trifling, and brook no insult to his stripes.

"A fellow can't open his mouth here, it seems."

"If I hear you open your mouth in that way again I'll march you down to the pump and get it scrubbed out for you." I once heard a corporal, who, unlike the general rule of non-coms, exercised a stern hand in this direction, and the saying seemed to strike home.

When a fellow's ideas and position get understood by the men, particularly if he shows that he can be, as occasions demand, very *fortiter*,

indeed, *in re*, while generally disposed to be *sauviter in modo*, they will thus reason:—

"Oh, So-and-So is not a bad fellow at heart; I'd as soon be in his room now as anybody else's. There's one thing, he's dead nuts on swearing, and it won't pay you to cross him in this. After all, it's only natural, seeing as he's what he is, and not used to our ways. And, any way, it's just as good for ourselves, for it's only a habit, after all."

As a matter of fact these men have a supreme contempt for an educated man, who launches out in the same peculiar language as themselves, and, though it seems funny, severely comment upon it.

"He's a nice kind of gentleman, he is! He'd be a nice chap to give a commission to!" I heard a man mutter one day as a fellow belonging to another corps, who was generally supposed to be a gentleman by birth, in perhaps an idea that he was making himself hail-fellow-well-met with the men of my room in Aldershot, made use of one of those peculiarly objectionable adjectives, which do service as oaths with soldiers.

"Corporal," said a man to me not long ago, "what's So-and-So? Is he really anything? He seems to talk just the same as a working chap."

Fellows of the *gentleman* class in the ranks, "Sandhurst failures," or others, as a rule, cannot be fairly described as particularly squeamish. Yet if you question them on the subject, you will find that the greater number of them suffer more discomfort from the continual use about them of this

language, which is not only disgustingly foul in itself, but, as a rule, in the particular sense in which it is employed, is absolutely unmeaning, childish and idiotic, than they do from food which is not to their taste, from surroundings uncongenial, or from discipline and work to which they have been unaccustomed.

It is the use of this unmeaning language, too, in the streets and elsewhere, by soldiers under the influence of drink, that gives the ordinary civilian such a bad impression of our rank and file. Soldiers, even taken as a body, compare very favourably, I should say, in most respects, with their civilian brothers, but in this particular respect, enlisting, doing away as it does with the restraining influence of family life, such as it may be, does not, I suppose, improve them. And yet it should, for a non-commissioned officer, if so minded—and if he did his duty as he ought—would summarily repress this habit, and he would find, too, that his commanding officer in the orderly room would always support him, and punish severely men brought before him for this, an indictable military offence. At the same time, by the exercise of a little tact, things can be mended in this way, without recourse to drastic measures.

It is easy enough, despite all silly talk to the contrary, by keeping up one's self-respect before the men, to almost entirely repress the use of this language, at any rate in its worst forms and in one's own hearing. These horrid oaths trace their

descent from the outcast population of the crime-ridden slums of eastern London, and are little, if at all, used by the working classes in the country. With a Cockney germ in a regiment, the disease, always contagious, becomes a veritable epidemic, and such it has now become, I fear, in both army and navy. In my regiment, recruited almost altogether in the country, things are not so bad in this way as in others, recruited largely from the towns. The presence even of one lazy, grumbling, foul-mouthed man, particularly if he be something of a bully, is enough to spoil for ever a whole room. Men of this kind should be picked out by those whose business it is to know them, and put all together in a room by themselves.

"The good old English 'damn,'" as Thackeray—*n'est ce pas?*—calls it, is far too mild and gentlemanly for these gentry, who, as I have already explained, can be curbed with comparative ease in a barrack-room; but in the unavoidable disorder and strangeness of circumstances in which one finds one's self placed in a troopship at night, it is impossible to exercise complete control in this direction. First of all, one's presence is not felt mentally, morally or physically, for the simple reason that one is buried somewhere out of sight in a hammock, which is itself somewhere in a wilderness of hammocks. Then one is almost certain, after being told off by the marines, to find one's self along with men not belonging to one's own barrack-room, and with men belonging to another

company within speaking and hearing distance. These fellows, even if they are made physically aware of your presence among them, do not know, or forget for the time, what your views probably are on such matters, and they know, besides, that you cannot be too "regimental" amid the topsy-turveydom of a troopship. I mention this here because it was a sore subject of complaint with our higher non-commissioned officers, especially the married sergeants and staff-sergeants—all separated from their wives—that they were all "boxed-up," of necessity, along with the privates. It is a pity that there cannot be more accommodation admitting of different arrangements on board troopships than there seems to be.

Thursday, 13th February 1890.

In spite of all inconveniences—to use the mildest expression—once having got to sleep, I "slept like a top" last night in my troopship hammock. All hands up before seven, and hammocks unslung, neatly rolled up, and given in long before breakfast.

I have already spoken about the feeding and sleeping arrangements on board; now for a few words on the subject of washing facilities. If any male amongst my readers—if I have the honour to have any—ever subjects himself to the possibility of a voyage in a "trooper" by enlisting into the ranks of Her Majesty's Army, let me once and for all warn him to provide himself with sea soap, marine soap, capstan soap, or what-

ever name it goes by, and discard all other brands, including Pears'. I am sorry I am not able conscientiously to put in a gratuitous advertisement here for the eminent *soapists*, whose speciality may be unrivalled in fresh water, but which, in contact with the briny, is nothing but a delusion and a snare. It is a most trying, not to say a humiliating, thing for a fellow to find himself standing, or rather stooping, over a basin in the ship's wash-house, rubbing away till his heart almost breaks to produce a lather, and just on the point of giving it all up in despair, when he finds his efforts crowned with just barely a small encouragement in the way of success. One thinks one has risen superior to circumstances, and then goes through the usual washing process to the bitter end, leaving the place once more contented and satisfied to live. Hardly, however, has one issued from the crowded precincts of the lavatory than one is thus accosted by some anxious comrade:—

"I say, is my face like yours?"

"What do you mean? You've grown wrinkles all over your own—down to your chin."

"So have you. It's the soap."

• "It's the soap? What do you mean?"

"Well, it's the sea—if you like it that way. They don't work together. *Don't wash, you know.*"

And so it is. It is hard enough, I have said, after considerable friction, when using salt water for ordinary washing purposes, to get even a thin layer of

soap on one's face ; but, once on, it is harder still to get the soap off with the same salt water. The latter, after some persuasion, simply agrees to leave just enough soap in thin parallel lines, not at all unlike wrinkles, all over a man's face, just as it were to prove, in case a very natural doubt should afterwards arise, that the said man is not hopelessly adverse to the daily use of soap and water. The fact of the matter is, that one can wash in salt water with only one kind of soap, and it is no use attempting to use any other. Our fellows soon found this out for themselves, and those who did not manage to get themselves this peculiar sea-going soap, began to "mark time" on the sailors and marines for buckets of fresh water.

To return to our ship. She lay still in Portsmouth Harbour until eleven o'clock.

Shortly after breakfast, the pier began to present a somewhat animated appearance, as many of the officers' friends—there were a considerable number of officers beside our own on board—came to say good-bye and see them off.

There was a rumour amongst us that we were waiting for the arrival of the *Assistance*, which was bringing us from Queenstown a draft of the Connaught Rangers, *en route* to Malta, there to join their headquarters. I do not know whether there was any ground of truth in this rumour or not, but, at any rate, we set sail without the Connaughts. In fact, I cannot see very clearly where we could have packed a strong draft, as we

now numbered on board 1500, not including the ship's crew, our entire battalion being about 700 strong. We had drafts, all bound for India, for the Rifle Brigade, the Lincolns, Munsters and Artillery. In addition to these there were a few cavalry officers on their way to rejoin their regiments in India, and some warrant-officers returning thither after a long furlough in England. All were under the command of our colonel.

Here I may as well give you some idea of the size of our "Trooper," and jot down the result of some inquiries, which I made respecting her.

H.M.S. *Malamer* was built expressly for the Trooping Service in 1867. She has a tonnage of 6500, and is capable of accommodating 2000 souls, or bodies, as I think would be more correct. Her crew, all told, number 230, and, as I have said before, the troops in this instance totalled 1500; so that you may see we had a pretty full complement on board.

She carried on board the following officers:—1 captain, 5 lieutenants, 1 staff commander for navigating duties, 1 doctor, 2 chaplains—Church of England and Roman Catholic—1 paymaster, 1 assistant paymaster, 1 chief engineer, 4 assistant engineers.

The above are the commissioned officers on board the *Malamer*; there were no less than 7 warrant officers—the sergeant-major and band-master are the only two in a regiment—all entitled to be "sirred," and I don't know how many petty

officers of various grades, corresponding to the non-commissioned officers of the army, but as I have said before, not holding anything like the position of authority held by the latter.

There are five Indian troopships, and I understand that one serves as a sample for the rest. The usual time taken by the Indian Trooper to make the journey from England to India and back is nine weeks. This allows, however, for a stay of about eleven days at Bombay, where, taking advantage of the Indian weather, the ship is painted all over. Our Trooper is due at Portsmouth on the 13th of April next, and will only stay eight days at Bombay. This is, I suppose, to make up for the unavoidable loss of time occasioned by her having to lie up for repairs, after the injury she sustained by running into a "Frenchman" off Cadiz on her last homeward passage. During the summer season, that is, between April and October, when the trooping is over for the year, the troopships lie idle in Portsmouth Harbour. Their crew, however, find plenty to do in working up drills of various kinds, off and on shore, thus refreshing their memories as to an important part of a sailor's duty, and re-accustoming their limbs and bodies to exercises, which must be partially neglected during the period of actual service on board a troopship.

So much for the size, appearance, and interior economy of the good ship *Malamer*.

CHAPTER III.

PORTSMOUTH TO GIBRALTAR.

“ On, on, the vessel flies, the land is gone,
And winds are rude in Biscay's sleepless bay ;
Four days are sped, but with the fifth, anon,
New shores descried make every bosom gay.”
Childe Harold.

It was about 11 o'clock when, after lying for a day and night motionless in the harbour, we steamed away from Portsmouth.

Just before we left a letter was put into my hands on board from Major K——, saying that he had intended coming down to see me off, but was unable to do so—thanks to the influenza, which had, for the time, quite prostrated him. I was quite surprised to receive an acknowledgment so quickly to a few words of farewell, scribbled in the Grocery Bar at Aldershot, about three minutes before we fell in yesterday.

“ As the *Malamer* steamed out of the harbour we were all drawn up by companies on the upper troop deck, where the band discoursed sweet music until the receding shores of the Isle of Wight faded from our view, and the good-bye to old England had been finished.

Last time I cast eyes on the Isle of Wight how different were my circumstances and surroundings!

Indeed, I thought this sailing out a very tame affair altogether, as contrasted even with the scene which presented itself on our leaving Queenstown, sixteen months ago, in that old *crock* the *Assistance*. Of course, to begin with, Cork Harbour is, at all times, a pretty picture, which is more than can be said of Portsmouth. Again, we sailed away from Queenstown with music, vocal as well as instrumental, with waving handkerchiefs, and—shall I chance it?—fluttering hearts; for was there not at least half a battalion of housemaids, with their mistresses in the supernumerary rank, drawn up in extended order, all along the windows of those pretty houses which overlook the sea! Then, too, the men were glad at heart, for they were going back to England and to home, whereas now they were (speaking of the majority) simply resigned to the inevitable, and commencing the first of a series of journeys of which they could not now tell the ending. Your typical Tommy Atkins is a very home-staying youth—devoid of the interest lent to distant lands and places by education; prompted by little real curiosity, and callous to the sentiment of romance. I speak of the type. He hardly ever sighs after fields fresher than the meadows within walk of home. And why should he?

“Home-staying youths have ever homely wits.”

There is no doubt that the soldier's wits are

somewhat sharpened and his fund of knowledge and of common-sense increased, by a term of foreign service; but I doubt very much if his mind is very much enlarged in the generally understood sense of the word. His travels have not the same educating tendency as ours. His clime he changes, but never his soul. By force of circumstances, he cannot do in Rome as Rome does, and if he could, he would not. He notes that in one country, he can buy such and such a luxury cheap, and that this in some way makes up for the enormous price he has to pay there for his English beer, and that the "Nigger" in one place is not quite so black as he may be in another. *Voilà tout.*

I do not think we were two hours out of Portsmouth, and the midday dinner being already over, nearly everybody was on deck leaning seawards, when the first news of a tragic occurrence in their midst spread far and wide among the ship's passengers and crew. One of the latter had been found hanging to a beam in a pantry. He had committed suicide. Some family trouble, they said, had preyed upon his mind, and he did not like the idea of rejoining his ship. He had done so, however, only to make away with himself within an hour after she sailed out of the harbour.

This occurrence cast a certain amount of gloom over all, and it was whispered amongst the troops that the ship's crew were greatly disturbed by the event, and regarded it as a bad omen, particularly

as the *Malamer* had only just been repaired after a severe mishap. Sailors are inclined to be superstitious, and this is quite probable. To make matters worse it began to blow hard, all of a sudden, and by tea-time we were pitching and tossing in no manner to be laughed at. Many a soldier, at this early hour, found it desirable to forego all thoughts of nourishment below and to remain in a recumbent position on the deck above. I, however, inwardly resolved not yet to capitulate.

Purchasing a tin of condensed milk to put in the tea, and some butter for the dry bread, at the grocery bar, I walked down to the evening meal feeling extremely proud of my prowess, and vowing that I should never allow myself to be conquered by mere human infirmities, like ordinary mortals.

After tea I put into execution, and with a satisfactory result, an idea that had for weeks past lain dormant in my brain. I came on board determined to have something fairly tolerable in the way of sleeping accommodation, and my first night's experience on board, needless to say, only strengthened me in my resolve. Somebody was to be made friends with, I knew, but who was the somebody? I determined to find out. With this object in view I entered into, no doubt, very interesting conversation with several very important-looking "Johnnies," who did not actually hold the Queen's Commission, but none the less thought a good deal of themselves.



After sundry remarks with regard to the weather, and questions as to the interior economy of the ship, the answers to some of which questions are incorporated in this account of the voyage, I proceeded to pump neatly but originally. It was not long before my efforts in this direction led me to seek an interview with an individual who was familiarly addressed by the nickname of "Tankley," but who also rejoiced in the official high-sounding appellation of "Captain of the Hold!"—a very decent kind of captain he seems too, and a great improvement did I find the Hold, after my last night's experience on the main troop-deck. The gallant captain understood matters very well indeed, greatly to my surprise.

"Oh, it's all right, sir; you're not the first corporal that I have given a bit of room to down here. Why, we took three gentlemen out last time, in the 18th Hussars, and they all slept here. Very decent fellows they were too. One of them, by jingo, had a power of money, and didn't he make it go too. He sent a telegram from Gibraltar, and another from Aden, and paid fifteen shillings each for them,—just only saying he was getting on all right and wasn't sea-sick."

Mr Tankley, I saw, knew how to give a mild hint; I was very much obliged to him, of course, for his interesting details, but, at the same time, I gave him credit for a good yarn of truly nautical dimensions. Two out of the three corporals I had been rather "chummy" with in Aldershot. They

were both *gentlemen*, but I think they would both be somewhat surprised to hear that they had been "chucking about fifteen shillingses" on telegrams in this *Grand Seigneur* fashion, either on board the *Malamer* or elsewhere.

Now a few words with regard to the Hold.

The Hold in the *Malamer* is off the lower troop deck, aft. Most of the warrant officers of the ship have their cabins there, and there are both military and naval officers' quarters communicating with it. In the centre of the Hold, that is, in the middle of the square—the cabins form the sides of the square—are deposited various boxes and sea-chests, belonging both to the ship's stores and to private individuals. Overhead these boxes at night are slung the hammocks of different seamen, on what would be called in the army *staff billets*, whose duties, as a rule, require their presence in or about the Hold. As only a certain limited number sling their hammocks there, in this place there is nothing like the overcrowding that there is on the troop-deck. In the Hold there is always quiet at night. No boisterous laughter and no unnecessary cursing and swearing. The men sleeping there are, as might be expected, a quiet, steady, respectable lot; and they are, as I have already stated, simply surrounded by warrant officers. It was in this place, after finding that there was in the Company a spare non-commissioned officer to whom no messing had been allotted on our embarking, and whom I got posted to mine so as to secure the

sleeping presence of a corporal by night, in the improbable event of anything more to be feared than singing or swearing taking place on board a troopship, that I slung my hammock on the second night of our voyage. The captain of the Hold is a first-class petty officer (F.C.P.O.) to whose care is committed the articles deposited therein, and who looks after the welfare of all its inhabitants in this respect. It is to his good offices entirely that I owe the very considerable improvement in personal comfort derived from the privilege of sleeping there at night. The same privilege was also granted to one of our sergeants, a personal friend of the steward's, but was refused to three or four others who sought it—Mr Tankley, though apparently little interfered with in the government of his little kingdom, not deeming it advisable to increase by much his population. At eight o'clock I slung my hammock, and standing up on a sea-chest, conveniently placed underneath it, swung myself into it, while the ship rocked to and fro and the wind blew fierce and strong, on the outskirts of the Bay of Biscay.

Friday, 14th February 1890.

Up this morning about seven, just as we were passing Ushant. Now really in the Bay. Wonder if it is always rough here. It has been rough enough in all conscience to-day, though not nearly so much as it was when I first made the acquaintance of this part of the world, and landed at Bordeaux over there. For a moment or two, as will

sometimes occur, felt an unusually violent dislike to my present surroundings, and longed to go once more touring in the Pyrenees, or any other place, for that matter, as a different member of society. For all that I do not think I shall regret being able to say that once upon a time I went for a cruise on one of Her Majesty's troopships as a real live soldier in a red jacket. But I am forgetting, we have all been wearing our overcoats ever since we left Portsmouth. The long, loose comfortable great-coat keeps us warm in the cold, dampish weather, and serves as an admirable *négligé* attire on board ship.¹

After a distant glimpse of Northern France, there was nothing whatever to be seen but a wide expanse of whitish water, with our ship a black spot in the centre. Notwithstanding this, all those who had not succumbed to *mal de mer* leaned over the side from morning till night, looking out vacantly upon the deep, or playing at a game of hide-and-seek with the fishing smacks which now and again made their appearance upon the horizon. I should

¹ Friday night, between six and eight (dog watch), wind logged at 10 degrees, which denotes a whole gale. It could only have blown 2 degrees more to reach hurricane stage, according to the Beaufort notation.

0 equals calm.

1 " light air.

2 " light breeze.

3 " gentle breeze.

4 " moderate breeze.

5 " fresh breeze.

6 " strong breeze.

7 equals *moderate gale*.

8 " *fresh gale*.

9 " *strong gale*.

10 " *whole gale*.

11 " *storm*.

12 " *hurricane*.

say about half the troops were now very sick, and a great number stretched themselves out upon the deck, utterly oblivious of everything that passed around them, and caring little, apparently, whether their more fortunate comrades, themselves not over steady on their legs, walked right over their prostrate bodies, or merely stumbled round them.

Notwithstanding this, there was duty to be done, just as there is on shore, and the buglers seemed never to weary of blowing the call for "swabbers" and "sweepers," whilst "orderly corporals" and "orderly sergeants" sounded just as often as in barracks.

It seems that before breakfast a certain amount of "swabbing," that is, washing and scrubbing the decks, is done by sailors. After breakfast a large party of soldiers, under their own non-commissioned officers, lend their assistance in the work; there are three decks to be swabbed out, at least once a day, and after the swabbing comes the sweeping. The daily duties for the military are detailed by the sergeant-major of the regiment just as on land, and to the orderly sergeants of companies falls the task of naming the individual men for the particular work. In addition to the swabbing and sweeping there are other fatigues found by the soldiers, and, of course, there are guards, regimental police, etc., just the same as in barracks.

My only duty just now is the ever present one of looking after my messing, seeing that my men

get up in time in the morning, roll up their hammocks properly, give them in at the proper hour, and take them out at the right time in the evening, and that the orderly man gives satisfaction as to the serving up of the eatables.

With the latter, an old soldier, who had been in India, and was never incapacitated by sea-sickness, I had little trouble.

In point of fact, our men were altogether wonderfully well behaved, and, in spite of rebellious stomachs, went about their work with a will, maintaining thorough discipline all the while.

Saturday, 15th February 1890.

Inclined towards sea-sickness last night; felt ever so much better this morning; up about half-past six, and found it a positively delightful change to be able to wash in the thoroughly respectable and well fitted-up lavatory of the warrant officers, in fresh water, instead of scrub, scrub, scrubbing in futile fashion up above. To value the ordinary decencies, not to mention the comforts of life, one ought to rough it for a short time either by joining the ranks, or by ranching in Colorado or some other place *perdu*!

After seeing everything set square in my mess, and *getting over* breakfast, I went up on deck, where, with short intervals, I remained sitting all day, perched on a coign of vantage afforded by the big box used as a receptacle for brooms and other swabbing and sweeping implements, which

stands at the top of the stairs leading from, the waste to the upper troop deck.

About eleven o'clock a cry of "Land in sight" was raised, and shortly afterwards something that I should venture to call a substantial cloud became discernible to all. That fellow up in the rigging overhead must have wonderful powers of vision! About two o'clock, that is two hours after the cry was raised, this cloud-land seemed all of a sudden to change into *bona fide* earth, and shortly afterwards we discovered that we were passing Finis-terre. Having previously found the replies of the sailors as to our whereabouts most unsatisfactory—some said we were off the coast of Spain, others maintained it was Portugal, while others were ready to swear it was France—I went off on a map-hunting expedition, and before long triumphantly returned the happy possessor, or rather loanee, of a P. and O. guide belonging to Ship's Corporal Surrey.

Soon it was evident we were running along the coasts of Spain and Portugal. The long mountainous tract of land remained ever present to our port, and when the shades of night had fallen, and we had all given up staring at "forrin parts," and gone down below, the dark coast line seemed as far as ever from its end.

I made a rough sketch of it in my note-book, and as a consequence had soon a crowd of curious soldiers round my box-seat, all thirsting for geographical information. I "chanced my arm," to

use a military expression, very considerably in answering their inquiries. To one batch of lately-joined recruits I made a statement to the effect that we were coasting the Himalayas, and the news spread like wildfire among their comrades. For the benefit of others I drew an interesting little diagram, clearly proving that we were in close proximity to the Fiji Islands.

By the way, as a noteworthy proof that Neptune is not having it all quite his own way with the military stomachs, let me put an interesting little fact on record.

When I went down to afternoon tea, to-day, hoping to find some milk to put in the boiled water, and some jam to put on the dry bread, I found that both commodities had somehow disappeared; now it was only this morning that I had a very distinct recollection of paying ninepence for a tin of condensed milk, and the same price for a pot of jam, which I was forced to go in for, after the butter had been reported absent. I always allowed a file of men in front, and a file to the right and left of me, at table, to help themselves from my ammunition, and they did so at breakfast; but, nevertheless, I had bargained for some being still to the good to do service in the afternoon. Instead of this being so, however, I found myself once more, within the same twelve hours, obliged to pay a visit to the fat and thriving colour-sergeant of Marines, who acts as canteen steward. (*Apropos* of this gentleman I may mention, in parenthesis,

that if he be allowed an interest on the profits, and but keep on steadily and surely in the good old way, he will be, of a surety, blessed in his old age, and die a millionaire.) His ninepences, I suppose, correspond to the repeating six-and-eightpences of the solicitor's bill in civil life.¹ I heard a rather witty remark at his expense to-day. "Well," said a humorous Irishman, who has just been reduced from sergeant, "if God Almighty only serves out justice to him as he serves out pennyworths of bread and cheese to us, that man will never see heaven." Let me mention, before I forget it, that, at ten o'clock this morning, we were all drawn up by companies on the upper deck, and stood there to attention, while the captain of the *Malamer*, followed by our colonel and a long list of naval and military satellites, walked round us, by way of inspection. We passed by several vessels during the day, and amongst others, they say, the troopship *Euphrates*, homeward bound from India.

About eight o'clock in the evening, just as the officers were finishing dinner, our band took up its position on the quarter-deck, and before long, attracted by its presence there, nearly all the military, and a fair representation of blue-jackets, flocked to this, the most comfortable-looking and

¹ I am happy to state that the canteen regulations on board the troopship have been greatly improved, and prices are much more moderate. This is well, for the poor soldier going abroad has, as a rule, very little to spend, and, on the other hand, whatever he has, he will only be too glad to part with, to add somewhat to his comfort on board.

inviting part of the ship, where the captain deals out even-handed justice of a morning, and where, when night has set in, the officers and warrant officers, each possessing little "snuggeries" of their own, smoke the pipe of peace and refreshment after toil. Talking of peace—what a contrast there is between the state of things yesterday and to-day! To-day everybody seems more or less contented with his lot, and now, under the quickening influence of music, the groups on the quarter-deck are fast waxing into almost boisterously good spirits. I have only seen one man sick to-day. Yesterday, nobody was quite well. X——, whom I had never before heard give way to useless lamentations, or seem in the "blues," stretched himself on a sea-chest near me in the Hold last night, and gave expression to really quite terribly gloomy views of life; yet, in the ordinary sense of the word, he was not suffering from *mal de mer*.

It has been quite warm to-day, and very calm. I have now come to the conclusion that calm of mind at sea is directly proportional to calm of wind and wave.

To return to the quarter-deck, by-and-by, like a flock of paradise-birds in alternating shades of mess-jackets, giving a pretty blend indeed, the officers of the various corps represented on the ship came flocking out of the mess-room. The band, in the best of spirits, played loud and lively, their pieces being purposely of a light, or as some people would say, perhaps, "slangy" description.

"You should see me dance the Polka" was warmly applauded by officers and men, the latter now proud in the possession of sea-legs, gyrating up and down the waste-deck to the serious danger of passers by. Then, of course, we had airs appropriate to the occasion. There was "A Life on the Ocean Wave," which would have been madly hooted yesterday, actually encored by Tommy Atkins this evening. It was easy to see, both in a real and figurative sense, in which way the wind blew, when, now that the ship was well out of it, the "Bay of Biscay, O!" was actually listened to with pleasure. This air, by the way, formed part of a selection played by our band, entitled "A Voyage in a Troopship," which, in itself, forms a pretty little romance of the sea, set to music. There was to us, just recovering from the effects of yesterday's sail, the very realistic rendering of the storm in the Bay, with clashing cymbals, beating drums, and bellowing brasses, followed by the pathetic little incident of Jack's dying like a brave British Tar, who had always done his duty, and, as a consequence, "gone aloft," while the grand finale was ushered in with "Rule Britannia," and the repeated declaration that, under no consideration whatever, either on dry land or sea, would we ever consent to becoming slaves.

After the *musique* had marched off the quarter-deck, and the majority of the soldiers, including myself, had gone to roost, the junior officers held "high jinks" all to themselves. The services of

two naval amateur musicians—a fiddler and an organ-grinder—were requisitioned, and the fun waxed fast and furious until nearly eleven, a middle-aged major of the Rifles, who acted as master of the ceremonies, setting a worthy example, in the way of gaiety, to the red-coated youths of the Blankfords.

Sunday, 16th February 1890.

Not nearly so fine as yesterday; cold, and inclined to be squally. Owing to their being a church parade for the ship's crew below, we were kept up on deck till eleven o'clock. Very miserable there—a cold, thin rain lasting the whole time. Very lucky that we had all our great-coats on!

At 9.15 we sighted some very queer-looking rocks, known by the name of "The Burlings." Not marked on my little atlas, but believe they lie to the south of Oporto. At two o'clock we sighted land again, at the same side, and passing Cape Da Roca, near Lisbon, in a heavy fog, found ourselves once more running along the coast of Portugal.

Got shelter in the engine-steering room, and entered into conversation with a highly interesting mariner, an F.C.P.O., named Harris, who acts as Boatswain's Mate. I hardly think, speaking from my small experience, that this type of sailor is very common in the service. He seems to take a lively interest in all that goes on around him, has travelled a great deal in the service, read not a little for his

own instruction, and, moreover, possesses the gift of describing his varied experience in good graphic English.

Learned from him that we are expected to pass Cape St Vincent at midnight. Sorry that I shall not have daylight to permit my "taking it" in my little sketch-book, wherein I have amused myself jotting down all the land we have sighted since leaving Portsmouth. It appears we are making between 160 and 164 revolutions, and, as a consequence, steaming at an average of eleven and-a-half knots an hour, covering, that is, about 270 miles in the day of twenty-four hours.

Everybody is now talking of Gibraltar and looking forward to to-morrow, when the famous rock, it is expected, will present itself to our view. Went to bed, feeling that I had done wonders in the way of nautical studies, having been fully initiated into the mysteries of "Bells" and "Watches." "Sufficient for the day," etc. No band to-night, the musicians not being so confident in their legs, and the audience not boasting of the same spirits as yesterday.

Monday, 17th February 1890.

Nothing to be had in the Canteen but cheese this morning, consequently had to make a breakfast on dry bread and tea, without milk! Just as I got up on deck, about 7.30, I was warned for the Third Watch at 8 o'clock. Remain twelve hours on duty, in charge of twelve men belonging to the Watch.

My party told off to act as Reelers, their particular duty being to haul in the reel, which tests the ship's rate of progress. As they are called upon at uncertain intervals during the day and night, the non-commissioned officer in charge of them—responsible for their prompt appearance whenever the boatswain's mate whistles "Reelers"—has always to keep a sharp look-out, and see that none of his men stray about the ship, or get mixed up with other men not on duty. On the whistle sounding, you march your party up aft on to that part of the deck reserved for the officers, and wait for the Naval Warrant Officer (responsible) to sling the reel into the sea. A sailor standing by holds a sand-glass in his hand, which shows the time taken for a certain amount of the rope to get stretched in the water, and on your receiving a given signal you give the order to your party to begin pulling in. The Warrant Officer then ascertains the rate of progress by the distance of rope used, as shown by a series of knotted points, comparing the distance with the time registered on the sand-glass. The nautical unit of length, "Knot," derives its origin, therefore, I suppose, from this rough-and-ready way of measuring by a rope. Of course this only gives the rate of progress approximately; the more accurate test is made by the scientific Indicator, which itself liable, I suppose, to various disturbing influences at sea, has thus something of a check put upon it. By taking the mean distance between the rate registered by scientific and by rough-and-

ready methods one is able to get at the real rate of progress, which in this particular case of ours was twelve and a half knots an hour. It was at nine o'clock that the Reelers, first called upon, ascertained this fact. An hour later we sighted land in the distance off the port bow, and passed by a small sailing vessel which seemed to have a very hard struggle, indeed, with the sea.

It is curious to note to what a degree any little event of this kind, tending to break in some way the monotony of sea-life, attracts the attention of all on board.

On the cry of "Land," or "Sail in sight," a rush is at once made for the ship's side, and everybody remains leaning over, all eyes fixed on the one point, until the object of curiosity, whatever it may be, has passed away entirely from the view.

At half-past nine the ship's crew paraded for roll-call above, and then marched down to the quarter-deck, where they formed up in about fifteen sections of fours for morning prayers. Very solemn sight! Each man, head uncovered, with cap in hand, listening most attentively to the prayers read out by the chaplain in front, and all joining together in the responses.

A very gloomy day this—very hard to see anything distinctly. This a pity, as we are just commencing the most interesting part of the voyage, standing now not far off Cadiz, where the Trooper met with the accident, which necessitated her putting back into the Spanish port for repairs, about

three weeks ago. At that time the contention between England and Portugal, caused by Major Serpa Pinto's proceedings in Africa, were at a critical state, and it appears that the Spanish sailors and dockyard men of Cadiz, who, in common with the rest of their countrymen, entirely sympathised with Portugal, were anything but friendly in demeanour towards the ship's crew of the *Malamer*.

About twelve o'clock, just before dinner, we got the first clear and unmistakeable evidence of our having covered already a very considerable part of the total distance to be traversed by the sudden appearance of land on the other side of our ship. On our port side lay stretched before us the coast of Spain, while Africa began to show distinctly off the starboard bow.

Here let me remark, *en passant*, that the *port* is the left and the *starboard* the right side of the ship. Should anybody be curious enough to read these notes of mine, taken on board the *Malamer*, I do not wish to sail under false pretences, and allow him or her to go away with the idea that my nautical vocabulary is an unusually strong and comprehensive one. For this reason I shall refrain from revelling, as I am occasionally tempted to do—as might naturally be expected of me after being five whole days at sea!—in terms essentially nautical, but such very ordinary expressions as *port* and *starboard* I really must be allowed to make use of! If any possible reader is so crassly ignorant of



DONKEY BOYS NEAR SUEZ

things, which every land-lubber even ought to know, as not to feel quite certain in his mind as to the distinction between "port" and "starboard," let me here mention once and for all that the port was originally called the "larboard."

Remember now that *larboard* and *left* both begin with the same letter, and you have once and for all removed all possible cause of self-confusion as to the precise signification of these ever-recurring nautical terms.

The long stretch of land we are now passing, off the port side, presents a very different appearance to that of Portugal as seen yesterday, or to that of the north-west corner of Spain, as sighted the day before.

It is certainly a rather daring thing to compare this coast-line of sunny Spain, as seen from afar by us, to the Fox Hills of Aldershot, and the comparison, no doubt, would call forth, at the very least, a good-humoured smile. Nevertheless it was made, at first sight, by all our men, and in point of fact not at all unnaturally made, considered in its present aspect—at whatever distance it may now be off—to the troops on board.

Yesterday we had a steep, rock-bound stretch of land before us, black in colour—it is white to-day. As seen from this, Spain gently undulates above the water-level, with what appears remarkably like brushwood and heather covering its sand-coloured surface. We cannot really be far off, or we should not be able to decipher the contours of the ground

so easily. At twelve o'clock we find ourselves right between the two continents, with Africa on our starboard, more distinct even than Spain. At two o'clock, however, we were so near the latter that we could distinguish, as clearly as possible, the general outlines of the town or village of Algeciras, and a few minutes afterwards we saw, at the far end of our line of vision, the great rock of Gibraltar, where all felt sorry we were not going to land; and half an hour afterwards, this great emblem of Britain's power in these latitudes, looking brilliantly fearless in the white sunlight, evoked a deep murmur of enthusiasm from our soldiers.

The sight of "Gib," and the consequent feeling of satisfaction on having already got over half our voyage, combined with the reassuring aspect of the weather, suddenly raised the spirits of all.

It was just after we had entered the Straits that a rather amusing proof of this was given. A small sailing vessel passed by us, within hailing sound. Our fellows, for what actual reason it is of course impossible to tell, began to cheer and huzzah. A swarthy-visaged Spaniard stood up in the vessel, and waving a handkerchief, or something that might be mistaken for such, uttered, in unmistakable accents, the word "Johnny!"

"Spanish Onion!" was the loud and spontaneous response of the red-coated Britons from the agricultural county of Blankford.

For five minutes this interesting interchange of greetings or storm of invective, whichever it may

have been meant for, lasted. The Spaniard, gesticulating furiously, screamed "Johnny! Johnny!" while the Englishmen sang out defiantly "Onion!"

About 4.30, as the troops flocked up once more on the deck, after their afternoon tea mid-decks, they found their old friend "Gib" almost completely vanished from their view and the coast of Spain anything but clear in the distance. Both Spain and Africa, however, could be seen with diminishing distinctness like tracts of cloud-land, until night fell and darkness cut them off from us altogether. Spain we began to look upon as quite an old friend, whom we saw disappear from our path with a touch of sadness, but Africa we knew would keep running across our track for a long time to come.

By this time the officers had all left that part of the deck sacred to them, and gone down to dress for dinner. I walked up and down there until seven o'clock, waiting for the boatswain's whistle to blow "Reelers," when my men coming up at the "double," in the darkness, pulled in the rope for the last time that day, and we found that we were still keeping up the average of twelve and a half knots.

At eight o'clock, after being on duty for twelve continuous hours, I was relieved for the night by another corporal belonging to the First Watch, who with his men, will be on the same duty until eight o'clock to-morrow morning.

There is one thing to be said about those duties of ours on board ship. Though necessitating long

hours, they are not particularly irksome. Somebody—I believe Lord Macaulay—has defined life on board ship as “imprisonment, with a chance of being drowned.” As everybody on board, without any distinction, is imprisoned in this sense of the word, those on duty are not much worse off than those with nothing particular to do; in the case of a duty like mine of to-day there is nothing whatever to prevent one’s reading, writing, or talking as much as one likes, provided only one keeps one’s ears open for the Call and one’s eyes on one’s men, to prevent them being absent when it sounds.

Relieved now from all responsibility for the time being, and sitting on a sea-chest, writing this, down in the Hold, I could hear the strains of our *musique* playing after mess upstairs on the quarter-deck. The sailors, who “hang out” in this part of the ship, are all round me—some slinging their hammocks for the night, some playing cards, whilst others are waltzing vigorously to the military accompaniment above; one fellow, two hammocks off mine, is pulling himself in for the night, bellowing the while—

“Oh, that happy, happy land,
Where there is no German band,
I’ll know what it is to be there.”

Only a fortnight ago I heard Mr Fred Leslie sing this at the “Gaiety” in London, in that song, so loudly encored, which sets forth the annoyances occasioned to the London householder, from the musical propensities of the soldiers of the Salvation Army.

Turn in for the night, with a feeling of thankfulness at having arrived at the end of another day, to the strain of "Two lovely black eyes," accompanied by what I shall venture to style a seasick banjo overhead on the quarter-deck!

CHAPTER IV.

GIBRALTAR TO MALTA.

Tuesday, 18th February 1890.

WENT up after breakfast, and saw everything set right in my mess on deck.

Before I forget it: one of my men—quite a boy, by the way—has been sea-sick ever since we left England, and cannot be persuaded to come down for his meals. He makes his appearance mid-decks only in time to go to bed at night, and spends the whole day lying like a corpse on the upper deck. Found him there this morning, and tried to rouse him, but ascertaining that there was nothing seriously wrong with him, I thought it best, perhaps, to leave him alone, and did so.

“He’d be all right if they’d only let him out and walk,” said one fellow.

“When he gets on shore, he’ll get his photograph taken, and then he’ll be himself again.”

I have two fellows under my charge here, who, coming from a very inland county, had actually never seen either ship or sea, except in pictures, until they embarked at Portsmouth. One of them, strange to say, has never once been sick, and was, I believe, able to account well for the rations of his

comrades at a time when nearly every man was *hors de combat*. My naval guide and philosopher, Harris, whom I found finishing his four hours' watch this morning at eight o'clock, tells me that one occasionally meets even with sailors who never get quite over the tendency to sea-sickness, and he had himself known one case in which a man got his discharge from the navy through not being able to properly fulfil his duties owing to this cause.

The Second Watch relieved the first at eight o'clock this morning, and the third will relieve the second at eight this evening, till then I am as free as anybody can be here.

Went for'ard, and, setting myself up on my favourite "perch" in that quarter of the ship, passed away the empty hours in reading the *Cruise of the Frolic*, one of Kingston's nautical tales.

It was only yesterday that I discovered that we had a library on board, with a sergeant and corporal of ours in charge as librarians. This duty, I believe, would be regarded by non-commissioned officers, detailed to more unpleasant responsibilities, as a good "skiffle."

A "skiffle," in Atkinsonian parlance, is some light duty which absolves a man from the necessity of attending parades, and leaves him plenty of spare time to himself. The duty of librarian on board ship must be a splendid skiffle, as it involves, on the part of the N.C.O. concerned, merely the attendance at the library between the hours of twelve

and two, leaving him the remainder of the twenty-four hours to fill up at his own sweet will.

Picked out this story of Kingston's from a, naturally enough, not particularly good assortment of books, for the simple reason that it dealt with the sea, and more especially with the Mediterranean, where our fates now lead us.

By-the-bye, speaking of the Mediterranean, I do not find any marked rise of temperature in these latitudes, for it is even chilly to-day.

Certainly, the waters seem less troubled here than in the Atlantic, but I believe it is sometimes quite rough enough for anybody in this inland sea.

About 12.30, however, the aspect of affairs changed considerably, and the sun once more gave forth its warmth. The sailors, nothing if not practical, made nature subservient to civilisation, by immediately spreading out on deck all their soiled canvas, and—must I say it?—stretched out not only this, but sundry articles of private wear—to wit, their week's washing—all round the deck, to dry under the influence of this little promise of a Mediterranean sun.

On the subject of canvas—while we were having one of these matter-of-form parades on the upper troop-deck, about twenty "tars," one after the other, began running up to the top of the rigging, in the most alarming manner. It made one almost dizzy to look at them, they did the thing so fast and went so high, quite justifying the remark called forth from a private soldier, just recovered

from sea-sickness, that they were "a d—d sight worse nor cats, and them's only poor dumb animals who don't know no better."

The orderly-man of the mess, putting a beautifully polished knife and fork before me to-day, with what he considered a *pièce de resistance* and some pickles, which he stole from some naval "authority," I believe, tempted me to try some salt junk by way of dinner.

I thanked him heartily, and, out of ordinary politeness, did my very best to do justice to his fare, but I am afraid he must have seen me wincing in the attempt.

At tea-time, I purchased some things from the grocery bar, which I shared with the benevolent individual just referred to, and, with him, came to the conclusion that hunger is really the best sauce, especially when plus *mal de mer* in its convalescent stage.

At 3.30 we sighted a large ship going Spainwards, and also saw a black object fixed in the distance, which Harris informs me is Cape Roca, which we should pass in the early hours of the morning.

We are now not far off the coast of Algiers, which W. never tires speaking of. Wonder, when he interviewed Arabs at Oran and Constantine, if he ever imagined, in some wild moment of fancy, that his eldest brother, within two short years from then, would sail by this picturesque land, *en militaire*, at the rate of fourteen knots an

hour? I suppose, however, the whirligig of time has brought about even more remarkable vicissitudes. I heard one of our sergeants say that he would willingly give a month's pay to "put in" for a few days over there, and I agreed with him in wishing that India was as enjoyable as a station, or as healthy, as this boast of France in the East.

Most of the sergeants, however, were not thinking much at this time of India, Algiers, or any other warm climate. Beer, or rather its inaccessibility, was just now beginning to cause them much trouble. Do not smile, gentle reader, but think, think of the agonies that must be suffered by the fully-matured warrior of perhaps seven or eight years' service, to whom each day a pint or two—I put it somewhat mildly—had become, as it were, a second nature, to find himself—now no longer sea-sick—thirsty as well as hungry, with no possibility of appeasing this inborn craving!

Some of them, too, wanted a glass of stout so very badly for their delicate wives, but could not get it for love or money.

This leads me to say a few words with regard to another quarter of this big floating barracks.

The married women, separated from their husbands, were told off to what, to all intents and purposes, was a regular barrack-room for themselves, and for the first time, I suppose, in their several lives, experienced, to the full, the meaning of the term "military discipline." The arrangements, no doubt, acutely disagreeable to themselves, feeling

the inconveniences of the troopship even more so than the men, caused, none the less, some amusement among the troops.

Soldiers in a regiment have, as a rule, I am afraid, little sympathy for their married comrades. Once a week, at least, in barracks there is a great regimental fatigue, and single Tommy Atkins finds himself compelled to carry so many boxes of coal on his shoulders to be deposited at the married quarters. T. A. objects to this—mentally, of course—very strongly, and does not at all approve of the introduction of domestic life and economy into the general scheme of her Majesty's Service. He regards the married men, and to a still greater extent, perhaps, the married women, in the light of a regimental nuisance, and is always only too ready to join in any laugh at their expense. Now, on board the troopship, Tommy found additional work imposed on his, to himself, already overburdened shoulders, and the poor helpless married women unwittingly helped to pile up the agony.

Private Thomas had to provide daily, from his numbers, a long list of sentries to do duty at different points, and one of these was the married quarters.

None of the women were allowed out of their quarters after a certain time in the evening, and long before the men were obliged to retire to roost, the members of the weaker sex were forced to turn out their lights, after submitting to what was practically an individual roll-call. A sergeant of ours, who

happened, by the way, to be a Benedict himself, was warned to take military charge of the married quarters. To the private soldier sentry fell the duty of preventing anyone entering the precincts of the haarem, except at a certain time of the day, when the husbands were allowed to visit their wives and children, and the sergeant in charge held himself responsible that all his flock had gone to roost, and that all danger of fire breaking out in their quarters was obviated by the putting out of all lights, at a very early hour, indeed. While the military gents were allowed to fill their souls with the music of their own band, over the quarter deck, of an evening, or even, if so minded, to waltz to its strains in the somewhat crowded gangway, their ladies found themselves close prisoners, at the other end of the ship, with a sentry pacing to and fro outside their door.

They say that the greatest criterion of a really high state of civilisation is the manner in which women, supposed to have equal rights with men, are treated, and we boastingly emphasise the fact that we, in Europe, treat our women so much better than they do in the semi-civilised East. Looking at the matter from this standpoint, civilisation on board the *Malamer* must have been at a truly savage ebb. The women there were treated just like children—helpless, mischievous children, all the worse for being grown up.

I shall never forget the troubled look on the countenance of Sergeant Benedict, as I shall call

him, after he had, like a chivalrous man, taken the ladies' word for it, and reported the married quarters present one evening, without ascertaining for himself by entering them, that all his flock were safe inside, and got a "severe choking off" from the naval warrant officer who received the report, for this neglect of duty. This latter official, it appears, had, just after the report of "Present" had been made to him, himself, come face to face on the narrow stairs with two brides of the regiment, who were just returning to their prison, after escaping for half an hour in the evening, for a breath of fresh air and a glimpse at the band-scene from the gangway above the quarter-deck.

"It will not be my fault in future," cried Sergeant B., after registering a pious vow or two, "if every one of these nuisances isn't under lock and key by seven p.m. another evening."

The next evening two soldiers, completely enveloping themselves in canvas sheets, walked about to and fro, aft, near to where the band played. They wanted to take a "quiet rise," as they termed it, out of the irascible warrant officer, already mentioned. The latter, making his appearance on deck, saw the two white forms flitting about in the darkness and, as was expected, mistook them for women. He followed, but they led him a dance from point to point, down stairs, up stairs, here and there, in and out of every corner of the ship. Exasperated, he at last called out to some man looking on—
"What do you mean standing there for with that

grin on your face, eh? Just double off and tell that sergeant of yours I want him here at once, and ask him what the devil he means by reporting the married quarters Present, when there are two of those precious women dodging me all round the ship for the last half-hour. I'll waltz the pair of them up to the Orderly Room in the morning, and as I suppose I cannot have *them* made prisoners, I'll see if I can't have their husbands for them as well as that sergeant, who is worse than themselves. I'll teach them to dodge me. Hallo! Here they are at last! It's about time, I think." Then making a few quick steps forward, red in the face and out of breath, assuming an air of much politeness—"Madam," he said to the nearest, "may I ask you and your friend there to let me know your names, and kindly tell me how it is that—"

Just at this moment the two soldiers threw off their white sheets, and, assuming once more their natural forms, innocently asked him—

"What's the matter?"

The Naval "Authority," looking intensely foolish, walks away without making answer.

As regards the women, very little really was seen of them until we got out of the horrors of the Bay of Biscay and entered the Mediterranean. Then the poor things, looking very woe-begone, began to crawl up to the portion of the deck set apart for them, where they were able, seated together on a long seat looking seawards, to pour forth their miseries into the sympathetic ears of

their almost equally helpless husbands, while their still more helpless children sprawled about the deck under their feet, and laughed or cried as the humour of the moment bade them.

The married "non-coms.," as a rule, had their batmen busily employed in bringing the children up and down the ladder-stairs, and generally fulfilling the functions of the professional nurse. One day I wanted my batman for something or other, and kept inquiring of everybody I came across if he had seen Huntingdon lately. "There he goes," says one fellow belonging to the company, "with the colour-sergeant's kids." In truth, hesitating at the top rung of the ladder, looking nervously at the descent, with a baby on each arm, stood Huntingdon, utterly neglecting his lawful master, from whom he received a fixed sum for performing small services, when so required.

On the subject of batmen, all sergeants, and many corporals, have a private soldier, belonging to their own company, who enters into an agreement with them, on receipt of a certain fixed wage, to clean their straps and accoutrements, look after their clothes, and make themselves generally useful to them. Indeed, an N.C.O., especially when it comes to his week for orderly sergeant, would hardly have time to get himself properly ready for parades without some such help. Batmen, of course, except in the case of warrant officers, are not officially recognised — that is, they have no regimental privileges whatever. They have to do their guards,

picquets, fatigues, and other duties, as well as attend all parades, just the same as any other soldiers; but then, as privates, they have much more time at their disposal than non-commissioned officers have, and a smart man finds it easy enough to serve two masters, himself and his non-com. at the same time.

To return to the subject, from which I digressed, the obtaining of what I supposed must be classified as unnecessary luxuries on board the Trooper. It was and, I believe, strictly speaking, should be an understood thing that a non-commissioned officer, or even a private could occasionally get for himself or his wife some of those "little extras," not included in his daily bill of fare, provided only that some kindly disposed officer of his was willing to give him a signed "Pass" to the ship's steward, who put down what was given to the officer's account. It was always—as is perhaps right—for obvious reasons, impossible for a non-commissioned officer or man to get the things, at first hand, for himself, but towards the end of our voyage, that is, when such comforts were much desired, whether the steward was afraid of running short or for some other reason, it became quite impossible to get as much as a glass of beer or even an orange. This caused a good deal of grumbling amongst the married non-commissioned officers of the higher grades, who, at all times, would be the only ones likely to avail themselves of the privilege did it exist. It must be remembered that on board a troopship there is nothing corresponding

to the sergeants' mess in barracks. The sergeants and corporals found themselves on board, except for purposes of discipline and work, placed on exactly the same level footing as Private Tommy Atkins. While on land, the sergeants have invariably a quite handsomely furnished dining-room of their own, with billiard and smoking-room adjacent, and the corporals—in my regiment, at least—a comfortable little “snuggery” to themselves, on board the *Malamer* we all found ourselves reduced to what was infinitely below even the ordinary barrack-room level on shore. You will see from this, that if the non-commissioned officers did not feel, on board the troopship, quite contented with their position, their discomfort was after all but natural enough.

This evening, while the band on the quarter-deck played, as usual, for the particular delectation of the officers, for'ard, at the mast, Tommy Atkins also indulged in song. After darkness fell upon the ship, the soldiers clad, as usual, in their long great-coats, set themselves down on the upper deck, and finding a patron in a friendly sergeant who set the ball rolling with his rendering of “Annie Laurie,” improvised an open-air concert on their own accounts. As seen in the Mediterranean twilight, it was a picturesque as well as an amusing sight—a veritable *café chantant*, by the masthead, minus the *café*! To one, however, who only gave a cursory glance at the proceedings, it would seem that the *café*, or rather something much stronger,

was flowing in abundance. As each man of the circle formed round the masthead, gave forth his song, sitting on the deck, a deafening encore was invariably given, and some facetious fellow—his stolid countenance unlit by a single gleam of humour—out of “pure cussedness” as Mark Twain would term it—inquired individually of the whole assembly as to what they were going to have in the way of refreshments.

“I’ll have a Bitter,” or “Mine’s a Shandy” was the reply made by each, without any apparent relaxation of the muscles of the face. Standing within ear-shot, without carefully observing what was really the drift of the proceedings, anyone would at once come to the conclusion that the troops were rapidly getting drunk. If intoxicated, they became, however it was, for reasons obvious, simply through “the exuberance of their own verbosity,” coupled with the potent influence of sea-breeze undistilled. Simultaneously with this rather amusing impromptu concert above deck—the officers performed on the quarter-deck; when I say performed, I mean to convey that they gave a saltatory exhibition, to the accompaniment of two naval fiddlers, after the military band had gone to their well-earned rest. Every imaginable dance was gone through, beginning with the common or garden polka, going on to the mazurka and waltz, and ending with a brilliant *pas de huit*, in which all conceivable kinds of steps were introduced, and which reminded one of what one has seen of Sir

Roger de Coverley, when attempted to be danced at a Christmas gathering in an English country house, where everyone keeps asking everyone else what's next to be done, and what one has read of the peculiar war-dance of the Red Indians of America, to the tom-tom accompaniment.

I believe our fellows acquired a wonderful reputation for gaiety, and were on board the *Malamer* always ready and rollicking—that is, of course, when not sea-sick—as every British officer should be, according to the three-volume novels. *Apropos* of novels, I must ask a question. Is the traditional “Tar” as depicted in light literature one and the same individual with the “Tar” one meets with in real life? If so, naval officers must be far different on board a Trooper to what they are in an ordinary man-of-war, or to what they are on shore.

Whilst the dance was at its merriest and wildest, an officer of the Rifles beckoned to his naval comrades to join in the festivities, but the senior service did not seem to be “for it.” While the army skipped and frolicked in a merry, if meaningless manner, the navy sat within view, in the doorless smoking-room, grave as a Turk, silently puffing the smoke of calm reflection through its beard. I could not help thinking that our French friends would admire those English officers of ours as *des gens bien sérieux*.

Wednesday, 19th February 1890.

I was almost forgetting to begin another day in my journal, as I have not been to bed since Monday

night. At eight o'clock yesterday evening, I forgot to mention, the Third Watch relieved the Second for duty, and I once more took charge of the reeling party. At eleven o'clock it began to rain on deck, and was stormy and chilly. I accordingly allowed my men to station themselves under cover on the quarter-deck, instead of leaving them on the upper troop-deck exposed.

Shortly before twelve, after they had "reeled," and would probably not be wanted for some time, I gave them leave to sleep till wanted, taking care to keep awake myself, so as to make sure of the whistle's being heard. I cautioned them particularly to stretch themselves on the deck somewhere, close to one another, so that I could wake up the whole party without loss of time, when wanted. Two hours later, when the Call went, I could find little over half my men in the darkness. The others, in search of warmth, had huddled themselves, here and there, into corners, and consequently could not be found at a moment's notice. Having marched up what I had of my party on the upper deck, I reported to the Naval Warrant Officer in charge, and asked his permission to go back and "hunt up" the absentees.

He told me that I had got quite as many as he wanted, which I knew before, and that an unnecessarily large number had been warned for the party at the beginning.

So far as he and the duty to be done, then, was concerned, everything was all right; but I was not

satisfied. Some of my men, when wanted, in spite of my caution to them, were not forthcoming. If on land, and in a settled state of affairs, I should probably feel myself bound to march them all straight off to the guard-room, for there is no doubt whatever that a non-commissioned officer is quite worthless, as regards questions of discipline, if he allows men under his charge to deviate, in one iota, from the order he has given them. When the men see what your ideas on the point are, and, as they style it, "know how to take you," you will find yourself implicitly obeyed, and have little trouble with any over a point of duty.

In the particular position in which we were placed on board the troopship—although, of course, it *could* be done with as much ease as in the barracks—it was not a particularly desirable thing to confine a man, and would only cause an unusual amount of bother and unpleasantness to officers and others in the morning, without gaining any really adequate results. I determined, therefore, to use my own discretion, and give them something in the way of mild punishment myself. I, accordingly, marked off on my roll the names of the men who had duly answered the call, and marched them back to the quarter-deck, where I told them they could make themselves as comfortable as they were able, and get to sleep. I had not the power to dismiss them altogether and send them off to their hammocks, even though they were not actually wanted. Their absentee comrades I soon discovered.

one by one, and marched them up on the upper deck, where, now that it had ceased raining, I determined to keep them awake all night. In the sequel, however, they were just as well off as their more reliable fellows, who stretched themselves on the quarter-deck below. These poor men, at three o'clock in the morning, were rudely disturbed in their fitful slumbers by the sudden appearance of sailor-swabbers between decks, with syringe-like tubes in their hands, which sent the water spouting all over the place.

At eight o'clock, feeling very queer and sleepy, I was relieved by a corporal from the first watch, which had just marched up from the main troop deck below and taken up our places.

Knowing that my hammock was already given in, according to regulations, and that it would be impossible, now that day dawned, to get anywhere to sleep, unless I lay on the top of a sea-chest in a corner of the Hold, where I might very likely be in people's way, I managed to get a bath for myself in the warrant officer's lavatory, and soon found all my sleepy feelings disappear in contact with cold water. I have noted such trifling little incidents as this in my diary, so as to be able, myself, in after time to realise to the full what a voyage *en simple soldat* on board a Trooper means, and to present a picture, faithful in all its details, to any outsider interested.

In the grey light of the early morning hours, I thought I could once more distinguish the out-

lines of the African coast, which was cut off from view at dusk last evening, but which we must have been following down steadily through the night.

It is so hard to tell land at any distance in an uncertain light at sea. First, you only see something like mist rising out of the water, then a cloud of settled dimensions, with a defined border on it, which gradually discovers within the border marked features, which become gradually and gradually more distinct, until the transformation scene is completed, and you are ready to swear that you see land at last. It was not, by any means, easy in this case to quickly distinguish between cloudland and *terra firma*, for, rising high and bold until, at a distance, they seemed to lose themselves in the skies, in one black stretch lay the Atlas Mountains. At breakfast, the land was distinct and clear, and later on in the day, two little Moorish villages, with a light-house, were quite visible, though their features were not so clearly marked out to us as in the case of the Spanish town of Algeciras, where we could easily count the houses from the ship, and were trying to recognise men and women; but then we were in the Straits of Gibraltar, only nine miles from side to side; with the Spanish coast but four to our left.

We are not going so fast to-day as yesterday, when, with the sail spread and a light breeze blowing, we made fourteen knots an hour. It

was rumoured then that we were expected to reach Malta to-morrow evening, but now they say there is no likelihood of our getting there before Friday morning. To-day the temperature preserves a middle distance, and it is neither hot nor cold; but a very strong gale is blowing, and there is a big swell on the waters. It was a rather ridiculous sight to see us endeavouring to stand to attention on our muster parade to-day; my company was drawn up forward—and in line, facing us, was the draft of the Rifles. Every now and then a strong gust of wind would come and blow a few of our fellows out of the ranks up beside the Rifles. My captain and the subaltern officer—each with a hand on his cap, struggling hard to find their sea-legs—would now and again find themselves bumping up against a corporal or sergeant, who was himself executing some manœuvres, on his own account, not all laid down in the “Field Exercise Book.” I, myself, coming flop over an obstruction, and my foot coming in contact with a protruding nail, managed to tear a pair of uniform inexpressibles rather badly. Here was a nice predicament to be in! In a day or two, when we made our formal entry into our new station, what a figure I should cut! Heaven only knows how long it would take me to get at my kit—all packed up only too carefully, and only too carefully stowed away, in goodness knows what inaccessible region of this wilderness of mast and rigging. I consulted my *fidus Achates*, Harris,

on the subject, and, like a gallant seaman, ever ready for emergencies, he swore to mend the damaged garments. It was useless referring to my batman; he would himself be as helpless as I, should any similar mishap occur to him.¹

Telling him to follow me down to the hold, I wrapped myself up in a blanket, and, sitting on a sea-chest, read Mr Kingsley, in as unconcerned a manner as was possible, till Huntingdon returned with the things beautifully patched up by Harris.

Every sailor is, it seems, a thorough tailor; they have nothing in the navy corresponding to our master-tailor, with his regimental shop and his soldier-tradesmen. The sailors themselves all make their own clothes, and make them, too, as well as they could be made in any Government factory at Pimlico.

Incidents of this kind may strike one as being simply ludicrous; but, I assure you, they are terribly serious calamities to those principally affected. While the mending process was going on, I had a visit from Lance-corporal B., the son of a colonel, who was in a terrible state of distress—almost reduced to tears—because somebody had just walked off with his towel and soap.

Of course, it is only on board a troopship that such mishaps could trouble such illustrious per-

¹ On the voyage out to India, every man is provided with a sea-kit bag, which is always within reach. He also gets needles, thread, etc., served out to him.

sonages as us! In the evening, the sea was calmer. Passing by the chronometer-room, I saw, through the glass door, the captain of the ship, pale and thoughtful, working away on his charts; while those whose lives were for the time committed to his care frisked about merrily below, to the nightly music of our Blankford band.

Outside, the sea is dotted all over with phosphorescent animalculæ, sending forth strange lights, like so many twinkling stars that had fallen from above into the water, without getting themselves extinguished. To bed at ten.

Thursday, 20th February 1890.

Mount duty again this morning at eight, and remain with my reellers on deck till eight this evening.

To-day is what on board an ordinary man-of-war they would call a "Rope-yarn Sunday," that is a week-day—generally a Thursday—set apart as a kind of half-holiday, which is, as a rule, utilised by the men at sea for washing their clothes, but which in harbour gives them an opportunity of going ashore to see their friends. Harris has just called my attention to a characteristic episode of naval life. A warrant officer is standing up on the fore-castle, surrounded by a large group of sailors. He is acting in the capacity of an auctioneer, and the men around him have come there from all parts of the ship, to see whether their unfortunate comrade, who committed suicide the other day, has left

behind him anything worth bidding for. This is what is nautically known as a "Sale of Run"—euphemism for "deserted"—and "Dead Men's Effects." This morning, as is generally done on a "Rope-yarn Sunday," the captain of the *Malamer* made a formal inspection of his ship and its belongings. All our tins and dishes were polished up like mirrors, and hung out over the table by the orderly men, who stood to attention as the great man of the ship, with his usual following of naval and military officers, walked round. At mid-day we passed Cape Bonn, which, in the distance, seemed to us more like an island than a cape—in fact, it was pointed out by the sailors to several of our "non-coms." as the island of Pantellaria; but we did not see the latter until two o'clock, when we found it at no great distance off the starboard. Pantellaria, a volcanic island, forty-five miles distant from Cape Bonn, and seventy miles S.W. of Sicily, belongs to Italy, and is used by her, I believe, as a convict settlement. Standing on a little elevation beside the engine steering-room, and directly under the bridge, I made a rough sketch of the island—the lighthouse on which, white in the sun, now shining gloriously—could be distinctly seen. When I first started my sketching on board the *Malamer*, I dare say—if the truth were only known—the troops, for the most part, were of opinion that I was simply endeavouring to "work my ticket" in a somewhat gentlemanly way. A man's "Ticket"—otherwise styled as his "Brief"—

is an Atkinsonian equivalent for his papers of discharge. In the army, when a man develops serious symptoms of insanity, or successfully "acts daft," he is, of course, presented by the authorities with his "Brief," and promptly relegated to civil life. The intermediate process—namely, the persistent repetition of strange, unaccountable and erratic acts—is described by Private Atkins as the "*Working of the Brief or Ticket.*"

Now, however, they seemed all to be of opinion that I was not really working my ticket, but was regimentally employed in executing a series of military maps and sketches of "Foreign Parts," which would go no little way towards deciding the fate of England and the Empire when our next big war came on. The situation was certainly rather embarrassing, or, at any rate, would be so to a man constitutionally shy. In front of me, with their mouths wide open, stand at least a hundred great-coated soldiers; while three or four "non-coms," on more familiar terms, are at my side watching, step by step, the gradual development of each rudely pencilled illustration. Two naval officers, on duty on the bridge above, look down curiously just now; and I could not help wondering to myself what they thought of the funny scene. Warm to-day, and very calm. We are going comparatively slowly now, not making more than ten and a half knots an hour. I believe this is done purposely, as, were we to keep up the average speed of the last three or four days, we should get into Malta at

midnight, and it seems it is not desirable to enter the harbour until after break of day.

Everything now points to our not being far off port. Masts and rigging, hitherto unused, are being put into position this morning, and all the sailors are even unusually busy. Amongst ourselves, C and D Companies have been told off to act as the baggage party, and have already commenced a preliminary overhauling of our regimental goods and chattels, while the store-armourers of all eight companies are busy oiling the rifles of the regiment. Each man is to be given only one blanket to-night, and that is to be returned into stores, with his hammock, the first thing in the morning. I think I shall say good-bye to the Captain of the Hold to-night, and get Harris's permission to stretch myself in my blanket on the floor of the at-all-times warm engine-steering-room. It is not worth while going properly to bed to-night, as, in any case, we should have to be up very early in the morning; and, besides, by staying up on deck, I shall not miss seeing whatever is to be seen of the entrance into Malta Harbour.

Each man is now walking about without his greatcoat—for the first time since we embarked—as the coats and capes have to be rolled and folded for to-morrow's marching order. All our things must be "fairly crummy," as the soldiers call it, as existing conditions on board a ship do not tend to facilitate the cleaning of one's uniform and straps. An order has just been given, that everybody is to

commence pipe-claying at once; but, as is very natural, I doubt if there are fifty men who have pipe-clay with them, or, at any rate, have it easy of access. As I might have expected, my precious batman has none, and does not know where to get any. Men, for obvious reasons, trouble themselves as little about the acid and pipe-clay question on the troopship at sea as they do on the battle-field in active service. Nevertheless, everybody, in compliance with the order, is now "soldiering" vigorously; and I have no doubt that, pipe-clay or no pipe-clay, we shall disembark to-morrow, after our eight days at sea, as clean and smart as any regiment has ever done. It is now expected that we anchor in the harbour shortly after four o'clock to-morrow morning. An hour ago, at four o'clock, we passed by Pantellaria. We were then, according to Harris, 115 miles from the Island of Gozo, which is itself twenty-one miles from the Lighthouse of Fort St Elmo, Malta. I have not got the faintest idea as to the situation relative to Valetta, of Verdala, where, I believe, we find our barracks. Wish we were going to be stationed in Valetta itself.

Miss my greatcoat greatly. I had got one of the latest pattern, a great improvement on the old, with capacious pockets, like a cavalry man's. Into these pockets I stuffed my note-book and anything else I wanted ready for frequent use, in addition to some letters I received the day before leaving England.

Talking of letters reminds me that the mail for England, I have heard, goes out from Malta to-morrow. If this be so, I must manage to write home and post on landing. Adjourn to the engine-steering-room, on correspondence bent. What fun to write a series of letters to different people, stretched out on the floor of the engine-steering-room, and publish them afterwards in a neat octavo, entitled "Letters from the Larboard!" Spend about an hour in this stuffy little refuge of mine—alone, thinking, but not writing. Do not feel now in the humour for writing on the floor, and will leave it over till we land to-morrow. Have been reading over letters from friends—letters of farewell. Even those who were greatly against my enlisting condescended to cheer me up by saying it was "plucky," to do so, and still more plucky to go abroad with the regiment. Have never regarded it from the point of view of pluck! Was it desirable—once having taken the step, after serious consideration—to throw away, without any return, two of the best years in one's life, or for fighting now, for say two more, to reach the goal at first proposed. Foreign service is not a particularly desirable thing for fellows placed in our peculiar position. It is strange, but none the less an undoubted fact, that, altogether, a man's chance of getting a commission seems to be better in England.

I intend to work very hard when we get to Malta, and lose no time. Must really try and

arrive at a more accurate estimate of probabilities and possibilities in my case within the next twelve months, and before the regiment goes to India.

The worst of it is that promotion in the ranks is generally slow abroad, and I am afraid now I must reconcile myself to crawling up, step by step, that drearily long list of names on the promotion roll in the orderly-room, and get my turn by strict seniority alone. The thought of drifting helplessly away in this position is, in all conscience, enough to make one shudder. I am now sailing between Scylla and Charybydis, as far as absolute certainties are concerned. Either buy out, giving up as vain one's long cherished hopes, looking foolish to one's self as well as to others, after blotting out two whole years of one's life, or, on the other hand, sail away further and further from one's natural sphere and, horrid thought! perhaps not attain success after all, or to have it so long delayed as to be little welcome when it comes.

Our band played to-night on the upper deck. It is for the last time on board—a farewell blast of trumpets. Relieved off “reelers” at eight o'clock. Shortly afterwards begins, on the very scene of my day's duty, the parting “sound of revelry by night.” This evening—I can continue to quote appropriately—“bright the lamps shone o'er fair women” on the upper deck, and, let us hope, “brave men.” To-night it is a dance as opposed to a boyish gambol, and the three or four ladies

we have on board grace the scene with their presence. The two naval fiddlers are looking on at a distance, but are not professionally employed to-night, as the *musique militaire* is doing all the work. A very pretty scene this, and romantic, too. The upper deck of a troopship nearing England's strange and somewhat out-of-place possession in the Mediterranean; the lamps shining brightly from the masts, to which they are tied, on to the bright forms of the dancers beneath. All was bright here—the bright scarlet of the soldiers of the band, the glowing faces and figures of the ladies, and the very brilliant plumage of their partners in their mess-jackets. Outside the maze of waltz and polka, in the unlit darkness, we saw groups of little-heeding soldiers going abroad to serve the country to which they had sold themselves for settled periods, and everywhere we heard the never-ending hum of human voices, while the sea kept thumping in dreary rhythm against the good ship's side.

I have often thought that a theatrical piece, either comedy or drama, could be very easily produced from out of the vast material available by a study of the every-day life of the ranks. That piece entitled "In the Ranks," which had such a long run at the "Adelphi" about three years ago merely introduced an incident of "soldiering" in the plot, and borrowed nearly all its material from ordinary English life. I could not help thinking to-night what material

was here, without straying away from the heterogeneous groups, dressed all to a button alike, listening to the band on the upper troop-deck. What comedies and tragedies in real life might be worked out of the life's history of many a man assembled there!

Beside the once horny-handed son of toil, who probably gave himself over body and soul "for his seven"—to make use of his own phraseology—simply because he had begun to feel too acutely the hardships of a struggle for existence in rich and powerful England, were many others who found themselves on board that troopship for very different reasons. There were some, but now-a-days there are not many, of this class, and their number is happily decreasing daily, who joined Her Majesty's service simply as the result of a drunken bout, and who, repenting at first, had come in time not to be sorry, and even think it wise to do what they did, when wisdom was absent.

Then there were outcasts of society of a higher social grade, men who had received superior education, but who, misusing their acquired powers by long-continued idleness, or by bringing, perhaps, actual shame upon themselves and their belongings, in the hope of sinking their identities, had taken service in the republic of the ranks, wherein, as a rule, they get ample opportunities of self-redemption. Then there are those who have had in their lives little reason to look with affection upon home or kindred, and who, leaving them for ever-

more behind them, have sought and found for themselves an ever-changing home in a British regiment. Chagrin and disappointment, too, of another kind have occasionally come to the aid of the recruiting sergeant; and there are men to be met with, here and there, to get at the real cause of whose enlisting you will first have to proceed to *chercher la femme*.

It must not be supposed, however, that the army receives only men of doubtful or unhappy antecedents on the one hand, or the scum of our working population on the other. In these days of short service, the great majority of men in a regiment are men without a *history*. They are, for the most part, tolerably respectable youths, who, first of all, joined the militia of their native counties, to wear a red coat, and to march behind a band, but who, once initiated into soldiering, become more or less fascinated by the military idea, with the result that, at the end of their militia trainings, instead of returning to their civil occupations, they bodily transfer themselves to the regular army. Many of them do this, after comparing the military with civil life, in perfect coolness of head, from all points of view, striking a balance in favour of the former.¹

Yet another very different class from all the above mentioned had its representatives on the

¹ In addition to the above, many of our soldiers belong to what I shall call the military caste. Their fathers and mothers have served, and they themselves have served.

troopship-deck to night. There were three of them, I observed, all apart from one another, listening in silence to the band, mere on-lookers at a scene of merriment, in which they knew well—were all things as they should have been—they would be now taking a more active part. I allude to the gentlemen by birth and education, who, prompted by instincts more or less chivalrous from childhood, had made up their minds to take service, for a time, at least, in the ranks, because, through carelessness, neglected opportunities, or circumstances over which they had no control, they had let slip from them their chances of entering the army—the only profession, perhaps, tolerable to them—in any other way direct. As regards their conduct in the ranks—speaking of most of those I have met with—while ever endeavouring to perform their military duties conscientiously, and to rest on good and friendly terms with their comrades-in-arms, they always try to show that they do not consider themselves one whit the less gentlemen because for the time being they wear the uniform of Her Majesty's army, without holding her commission. The gaiety came to an early close this evening, and by ten o'clock all was quiet on the upper deck. Wonder if the ladies are "cribbed, cabined and confined," like their sisters at the other end of the ship. Whether they had to report their presence in quarters to the naval authorities or not, they all retired together at a very early hour.

It is now about half-past ten, and I am writing this by a flickering lamp in a corner of the Hold, wherein the last man has pulled himself up into his hammock and invoked sleep. I think I shall go up on deck to my *sanctum sanctorum*, where Fidus Achates is on watch between twelve and four. Fidus kindly consents to let me sleep there on the floor, if I bring my blanket up with me, and promises to wake me up when we find ourselves off the Island of Gozo, which I am to sketch. F., it seems, has been making some inquiries about me amongst the soldiers, and learned from them many interesting details of my private history, of which I had before been blissfully ignorant. He takes, it seems, the greatest interest in me, and insists upon my putting my shoulder to the wheel, and working off my notes into a real live book. When the book is finished—if ever it is—I hope, for the sake of Mr Harris, as well as for my own, that some kindly-disposed editor or publisher will extend to me his sympathies, and thus give pleasure at the same time to a really fine specimen of Her Majesty's Royal Navy.

On the way up to the engine-steering-room, I passed, sitting together at the foot of the ladder, two sergeants, looking very white and woe-begone. "Thank God," says one, "we land to-morrow; and if God spares my life till then, I shall be able to have a pint at any rate."

I looked at the speaker. There was a piercing earnest look in his eyes, and

of agony about the corners of his mouth. It was the old story—nothing but water, more or less fresh, which is certainly better than salt, but is not altogether satisfactory to the man who, for years, has been accustomed to a daily drain of something stronger and more substantial. I was told by a man to-day, that he would willingly have paid a shilling for an orange to give to his sick wife, but could not get one for love or money.

Friday, 21st February 1890.

Went up to the engine-steering-room last night at eleven o'clock, with the one remaining blanket from my hammock; and, having first asked and received permission of the boatswain's mate on duty—Harris did not come on until twelve—proceeded to stretch myself out on the floor. Although the room, as it always is, was quite warm, there was a very cold draught from the half-open door. In spite of this cold night-wind from the sea, I must have fallen asleep before twelve, for I was awakened by Harris about three o'clock in the morning. I slept so soundly, he said, that he did not like to disturb me. It is wonderful how soldiers acquire the habit of falling asleep when tired, at a moment's notice, and anywhere. They say the Duke of Wellington (or was it Napoleon?) could sleep in his saddle. I believe I could do the same now. Fidus had some hot sea-brewn tea ready for me.

and, after we had smoked and chatted for about half an hour, we stepped outside the door to look at the Lights of Gozo, glimmering in the morning darkness.

This is assuredly the beginning of the end. At four o'clock Achates was relieved, and went off to finish the morning hours in his hammock below. By this time Gozo—before we had only seen two lights, with what seemed like a shadow between them—stood out like a long black rock, from one end of the ship to the other. The Watch were all on deck, some stretched out like so many corpses, in their white shroud-like blankets, others walking up and down, in silence, with their blankets thrown round their shoulders, looking not at all unlike the Red Indians of Buffalo Bill, as one sometimes saw them out shopping in Kensington.

A detachment of one company of the Connaught Rangers garrisons Gozo. If we had passed the island in day-time, there is little doubt that we should have received a warm welcome to the Mediterranean from our last year's comrades-in-arms of the old Aldershot Third Brigade.

At about 4.30, went downstairs to make certain, in time, that all my things were fit and ready for the move, and that my hammock was given in. The men were now beginning to rise, and there were signs of a general stir, amidst a hubbub of voices on the upper troop-deck. When I came up on deck again at five o'clock I

sides, discussing our whereabouts. We were again off what seemed the same black rock, with a bright light at one end of it. The general opinion was that it was Gozo. I gave it, as mine, however, seeing that we passed Gozo nearly two hours before, and that it is only twenty miles from there to Malta, that it was our first glimpse of the latter place. As a matter of fact, we were just then entering Malta Harbour.¹

There is very little twilight in these latitudes—the transition between light and darkness being very short. Within half-an-hour, the black curtain of the night had suddenly risen, as if at the touch of some magic wand, and a really beautiful scene, which might have been lifted bodily off the stage, or copied by nature from some fine old picture of the imaginative order, was opened out before us.

Rising brilliantly from above the still dark surface of the sea, was a large fort, built of great solid blocks of white stone. Half monastery, half castle, but all Italian in appearance, Fort St Elmo, in the early morning at sea, seemed a very fitting habitation for a strong detachment of those monk-soldiers, who had the headquarters of their knightly order in this island, up to a period well within the times of the grandfathers of many people now living on it. Yet, I doubt if this fort be of their

¹ It must be remembered that we had been going at a crawling pace—if the reader will pardon such a nautical barbarism—all the morning.

handiwork, and I daresay, on closer inspection by land, its appearance would be quite disappointingly British. Down at the foot of the fort, by the sea, silent and motionless, one was able to distinguish two or three small boats, whose occupants, evidently engaged in fishing, leaned lazily over the side into the water; on the other side, and behind the ship, there was soon quite a flotilla of these little boats, dancing on the top of the waves, following in our wake, and by six o'clock, when we had got well into the harbour, and were listening on deck to the bugles from the forts and barracks all over the island sounding the *réveil*, we had a crowd of jabbering Maltese water-pedlars, in their brightly-painted fragile-looking little skiffs, darting in and out and around us. They offered all kinds of cheap luxuries for sale—cigars, cigarettes, oranges, figs, dates, tobacco, etc., and before the good ship had properly advanced in the harbour, these much-gesticulating natives had made good their entry into her. Some of the more enterprising or privileged amongst them soon set up a stall on the upper deck, where they did a roaring trade amongst the soldiers, who, like most other people, always like to buy cheap. The grocery bar had met, for an hour or so, with a very damaging opposition. To these gentry, too, it seemed a matter quite immaterial whether they accepted payment in coin or kind. Indeed, if the former were invariably insisted upon, their wares could not so quickly have disappeared, for, needless to say, our soldiers, after their eight

days at sea, and their grocery bar experiences, had almost all come to feel what the *res angusta domi* meant. The Maltese were evidently accustomed to this peculiar state of the military finances, for they kept crying out, "Sea-cap! sea-cap! changee for sea-cap!"

I do not know exactly whether the sea-cap—of not much intrinsic value—was considered the personal property of the men, and "stopped for" out of their pay, or whether the quarter-master's department had still some further claim on it. Certain it is that the sea-caps were now no longer of any use to the soldier himself, as he would be improperly dressed, and liable to be made a prisoner, did he "knock about" with them in barracks, even when off duty. Off came the sea-caps, without any further thought on the subject, and fruit or tobacco taken in exchange for them. As a non-commissioned officer, and only a junior "non-com.," not feeling quite certain as to the exact right of the question, I neither liked to stand on deck a spectator of this primitive bartering, nor, on the other hand, to make myself officious, by interfering, and, perhaps, find myself entirely in the wrong by doing so. I acted, therefore, like the proverbial policeman, and simply walked round the corner. I heard, however, that in exchange for his now useless sea-cap, it was possible for a penniless Tommy to become, after many days of privation and self-denial, the happy possessor of a dozen oranges and twenty or thirty cigars, and was not then in the

least surprised to see that the spirit moved him to sell.

About eight o'clock, another industry of Malta sent its representatives on board, and we found ourselves in the agonies of coaling, with about a hundred coal-heavers running about the lower troop-deck, in their bare feet. These Maltese coal-heavers are quite famous, by the way, for their quickness and sureness of foot, and certainly it was simply marvellous to see how they ran up and down the planks, extending from our lower deck to the coal-barge outside, with heavy loads on their shoulders. I do not know whether our Blankford Britons, looking on, were more amazed or amused at the spectacle of this great human beehive all humming away in Maltese. I believe, however, that our men's minds were, for the most part, engaged in wondering simply as to what kind of a place, for a soldier, the new station was. I, however, had little time to think or wonder to myself. Along with a sergeant, I had to march a large party of men down to the uttermost depths of the *Malamer*, there to superintend the carrying out of the ammunition—we had ninety-two bags of it—from the cellars, where it had been under lock and key, during the voyage. Having seen the task assigned to me duly executed, I went down to my company to get ready for marching off, another corporal being already detailed for escorting the ammunition to our barracks.

At eleven o'clock, the whole regiment was drawn

up on the upper troop-deck, ready for disembarkation. What a different lot of men they seemed! Instead of the funny-looking fellows, walking about in great-coats, with their queer-looking sea-caps pulled over their heads, one now saw over six hundred red-coated soldiers, in full marching order, valise and rolled great-coat over their shoulders, white "puggarreed" helmet on the head, rifle in hand, faultlessly dressed out in the new Slade-Wallis equipment, which they were introducing for the first time to Malta. Although similarly "got up" myself, I could not help glancing down the line, and wondering how on earth men were able to turn out so spruce and smart, after being penned up for eight days like cattle on the Trooper. To the man not behind the scenes, there was nothing remarkable in this; it was merely an ordinary marching-order parade. To the man who had "gone through the mill" of the troopship, and had felt how hard it was to look after one's self there, not to speak of all one's straps and accoutrements, it was more than remarkable, and a forcible illustration of what is meant by the terms *discipline* and *order*. Very few men had lost anything of their belongings, and all were standing to attention on the upper troop-deck, at the ordered hour, ready to march off.

CHAPTER V.

A DAY IN MALTA.

AT 11.30, we had at last marched off the troopship on to the Government tender, and were being quickly steamed therein across the harbour to the Verdala side of the water.

In about ten minutes' time we had marched off the tender, and once more drawn up as a battalion in line, in a curious looking old courtway on the water-side of the Mediterranean. The "old so-much-teenth," land-lubbers to the soles of their feet, were only too delighted to find themselves once more standing shoulder to shoulder on *terra firma*. One could see it in their faces, as, numbering off, they formed fours right, and left wheeled for Verdala. We had no band to meet us and play us in, the bands of the regiments stationed on our side being otherwise engaged, I suppose—and, of course, to play ourselves in would be hardly good form. The soldier always likes to have a band on such occasions, but now it mattered little to him that he marched into his new station without the cheery strains of military music. It mattered a good deal, however, that we were once more on dry

land, going to a substantially-built barracks of solid stone, with the prospect of having real settled beds, instead of hammocks, for the night, and plenty of room to move about ; hot and regular meals, and the thousand and one comforts attainable even by Tommy Atkins, when he is in his proper element on shore. As we marched through the steep and narrow street leading from the water side, over an open hill, rejoicing in the title of the Piazza Santa Margarita, through still narrower streets, ascending the whole way, until we reached the Barracks of Verdala, I could not help thinking that the Blankford Boys, or, for that matter, any British soldiers, were somewhat out of place in this rocky island, where Italian military would certainly look more at home. Every place had an Italian name. There were the San Lorenzo Steps, where we landed ; the Strada San Lorenzo, our first street ; the Piazza Sta Margarita, the Strada San Giorgio, and the Strada Santa Margherita, right up to the Barracks of Verdala, which itself takes its name from an old Grand Master of the Knights.

Of course, the houses were high and white, all built of stone, with bright green windows and casements. Standing on the landing steps, curiously scanning us, and wondering, doubtless, whether they would find many customers in the new regiment, were the swarthy-visaged, bare-footed boatmen ; and, looking out of the windows along the line of route, were women of the island, not at all unlike nuns, with their long black

mantillas, with hoods to match, almost entirely concealing their features. Nothing, indeed, could be well more sombre than their attire. They look so *triste* and pensive, that I cannot see how they can improve at all on their everyday dress for purpose of mourning. I heard that the dress had its origin in some historical occurrence, dating back only to the short-lived French occupation of the island, less than a hundred years ago. I do not know for how much the story is worth, but I take it that the fashion of thus almost concealing face and figure in a black shroud shows that we are now nearer in many ways to the East than to the West. In point of fact, although all the streets and public places have Italian names, there is a good deal of the Arab about the Maltese islanders.

In the very narrow, not particularly sweet-smelling streets nearest to the barracks, which reminded me somewhat of some streets in Bayonne, I listened attentively to the language of the men and boys, talking loudly enough amongst themselves, as we marched by. There was very little Italian in it. In fact, one understanding Italian could no more understand them than an ordinary Parisian could understand Bas Breton. The guttural throat sound, which must surely be Arabic, was very frequent; indeed, I have been told that a Maltese can understand with ease the language of the Barbary peasants, and when people do emigrate from Malta, it is to Africa they go. In Tunis, Egypt, and Algiers, it seems, they thrive.

Here and there a stray soldier, looking, to my mind, rather out of place in his red coat, had a good look at the new regiment, standing to attention as we passed him in the street. Even our soldiers on foreign service, here, look very different from the gallant warriors, beloved of nurserymaids, in the provincial towns and cities of Old England. They are all well "tanned" in complexion, and some of them seem to "wear the burnished livery of the burning sun," just as well and easily as the natives around them. No one could help noticing the contrast in appearance between these stray members of the Malta garrison and the men of our battalion fresh from home. Even the dress differed in many points. The only thing that smacked much of foreign service in ours was the white helmet, or rather the "puggarree," which encircled it; for two or three of the regiments in Aldershot have had white helmets in wear for some time past. Our clothing is the same still as that worn in England, while the regiments here wear uniform of a much lighter material, which, though similar in colour, is very different in other respects from the home service pattern.

As we marched into barracks, over a drawbridge through a gateway with sombre roofing arch, a faint cheer was raised by the men of the regiment, whose quarters we had come to take over. By the way, it seems somewhat strange to us to find ourselves once more inside a barracks, with walls and gates. The last time we were quartered in barracks

was in Fermoy, in the south of Ireland, a year and a half ago. Since then we have lived in the wooden one-storied huts of the great camp at Aldershot, unconfined by gates or walls, the peculiar functions of which are fulfilled by patrols, outside the boundary lines, of military police, mounted and dismounted.

In we marched, right through the principal barracks, from one gate out through the other, until we halted at last in a large open square, about six hundred yards from the back gate. The square goes by the name of St. Clements, and a company of the regiment in Verdala Barracks is quartered in a corner of it.

After we had formed up in column of companies, halted and grounded arms, the men were allowed to fall out and walk about the square, until some necessary arrangements as to the particular rooms to be occupied by the different companies were made. Soon we were besieged by men and boys, with baskets, who walked about amongst the soldiers, crying their wares in more or less intelligible English—"Seegorrs! seegorretts! oranges! gud feegs; changee forr sea-caps!"

These vendors are all evidently of the Garrison Hack order, and can no doubt curse and swear fairly well, in broken English, though utterly unable to carry on a conversation in that language, or to answer even questions not directly bearing on their individual occupations. Our fellows in the highest spirits laughed at and mimicked the Mal-

tese, who smiled a business smile and went on selling. Soon everybody was eating oranges, good and charged for at the rate of three a penny! For the time being all were charmed with Malta, and vowed it an earthly paradise. And so it was after the troopship. Coming across the harbour in the tender, by the way, I called out "Three cheers for the good ship *Malamer*." I was very sorry, as the good ship's crew were within hearing of the appeal made, that it was not responded to as it should have been, but in time, no doubt, the men will come to speak of it even affectionately, and remember that if they had a rough time of it on board, they had also in a way much amusement and not altogether unpleasant experiences. As it is, under the influence of the warm sun and the new scene, and the assuredness that sea-sickness was now a thing of the past, everybody was boisterously merry. Three of the Cadet corporals, as the men sometimes term them, walked up and down the square together, seeming to experience once more, to their very hearts' core, *la joie de vivre*. By them, perhaps, the change was more vividly felt than by the remainder. One of them—I must not forget to mention—normally of not a particular enthusiastic or lively frame of mind, all of a sudden began to dance, what he described as a Southern dance, all to himself in a corner of St. Clement's Square, singing the while couplets from "the Gondoliers."—

"We'll dance a Cachucha, Fandango, Bolero,
Old Xeres we'll quaff Manzanilla, Montero"

I venture to predict that in a short time he will not feel so much inclined to dance, for duty, I believe, is very hard here, and Malta, in the summer months, is much too hot to be pleasant.

In less than an hour's time we "fell in" again. B Company marched across St. Clement's Square, to enter into occupation of the quarters there; the remaining companies marched back again to the main barracks. In a wonderfully short time each company was apportioned to its particular locality in the barracks, and the men of each, under their respective non-commissioned officers, told off to the various barrack-rooms in the company's charge. No. 72 room of F Company was allotted to me. Here was a fresh cause for congratulation. The rooms are bright and cheery-looking, all stone and not large. This, to the non-commissioned officer in charge, means a good deal, as it also does to the individual men. Instead of having eighteen or nineteen men under one and the same roof, as we had in Aldershot, we have here only nine. In fact, I believe, there is a strict local order that this number is not to be exceeded, and though the rooms are small, there is, from a soldier's point of view, ample accommodation for the men occupying them. Again we are reminded that we are in a semi-tropical climate. It is February, and fires are burning everywhere in England, I suppose, while in the barrack room here there is not even such a thing as a fireplace to be seen. With such conveniently small rooms to be cleaned up daily, and a

small number of men to look after and work with, with space enough on all sides, if he is lucky enough to have a fairly good and respectable set of men under him, the position of the non-com. living in the barrack room is tolerable.

In a wonderfully short time we had all divested ourselves of our heavy equipment, put our rifles in the racks by our bedsides, and turning out in Fatigue Dress drawn all our bedding from the stores. Everything done quickly, yet without any unnecessary fuss, just as was the case in leaving England.

At three o'clock, when the 1st Border Regiment, with the band of the 2nd Welsh at their head, marched out of the barracks *en route* to India, our fellows were actually settled down in the quarters they had occupied until two hours ago.

In a thoroughly sympathetic mood, the new corps from the balconies outside the rooms or from the flat oriental roof over-head, sent up a hearty cheer for the old regiment, setting off at that hour for that distant land where we all expect to follow them, rather too soon.

From the large window or rather port-hole at the back of my room, there is a splendid view of our side of the harbour right across to Valetta. Immediately above, from the flat roof, where a whole battalion could be put through the Manual or Bayonet Exercise, and where I understand the men from the barrack-room underneath occasionally sleep out during the hot summer nights, the view

is, perhaps, even better. The only thing, as yet, that I see in the way of a disadvantage in these palatial barracks, is the slippery stone staircase leading to the upper story, from which, as I have already reason to know, you have to descend very cautiously, indeed, at the imminent risk of breaking your neck.

The quarters of B Company are unique in their way. At the far end of St. Clement's Square, in the left-hand corner as you go from this, you see a door, which seems to mark the entrance to a small stone house, no bigger than an ordinary Irish cottage. If you are told that a whole company, numbering upwards of a hundred men, have their local habitation and abode beyond the threshold of this little cabin, you very naturally come to the conclusion, that the man who tells you is either mad or joking. Crossing the threshold, however, and entering the house, you find yourself promptly descending a long, long staircase of stone, which seems to lead into the very bowels of the earth. But where it leads to at first, you really cannot say, for, standing at the top, looking downwards in the dim religious light of the place, there is no ending visible, nor does this become at all apparent until you have actually reached the bottom step, and find yourself turning to the left and wonderingly pacing a long subterranean gallery or cloister of clear cut stone. Off this gallery, at every few yards, on either side, you will observe a niched recess in the wall, and if at all of a romantic turn

of mind, you are somewhat surprised not to discover in each cell—for such they resemble—a dead monk or two reclining, or on his knees. Before taking notice of these cells, as you pass through, you have been probably thinking of Mr Rider Haggard, and wondering whether a good day's walk through subterranean passages will suddenly precipitate you into some wonderful river, flowing backwards at the bottom of the Blue or some other fantastic mountains, in the very centre of Central Africa.

Before you have had time to make up your mind, however, you find yourself turning into a better lighted courtway, and all illusion is there dispelled at the sight of a number of miniature chambers, with the inscription overhead in undeniably plain English, "Barrack-room, number so-and-so—Four men to each room." These rooms are all under the ground, and only reached by the dark stone steps already described.

What a strange place for the nineteenth century British warrior, hailing from Blankford, to find himself in! He probably does not see the strangeness of it, however in the same light as we should.

Of course, there is little doubt that where Private Atkins swears and pipe-clays to-day, in the good old days gone by, the monks sang and prayed.

In the other corner of St. Clement's Square, similar in approach and construction, is the miniature barracks of *Notre Dame*.

May the souls of the good monks rest in peace,

and not rise from their stony graves in protestation !¹

Standing on the roof here—the ramparts, by the way, are dotted here and there with old-fashioned guns,—one sees forts and barracks all round. On the other side of the wall, of massive stone blocks uncemented, at least thirty feet high, which on one side bounds St. Clement's, is another somewhat similar square, on the lower level, where a company of the Essex Regiment, on detachment at Zabbar Gate, drill and exercise.

Zabbar Gate, leading to the village of Zabbar, is within five minutes' walk from here, and visible from the roof of Verdala Barracks.

After seeing everything set right in my room, I stretched myself on my bed and for the first time, since leaving England, felt really ill. It did not seem at all a hopeful beginning, and I really thought I should have had to report myself sick in the morning, and experience what life in the Military Hospitals of Malta meant. However, after a sleep of two or three hours, I awoke feeling once more quite well and with quite a strong appetite for the barrack-room tea, which—do not smile—was really delightful after the troopship meals. To sit at a table which was quietly disposed, and not restless and disturbed, was a pleasure

¹ What a pity it is to spoil this, my highly elaborated description, and blot out a small bit of romance at the same time ! Truth, however, compels me to state that I have, since writing the above been told on good authority, that these underground passages have never been used by the monks.

in itself. I resolved to make acquaintance with the world outside at once, and accordingly dressed myself in Walking Out Order, with gloves and cane, and passed out into the streets beyond the Barrack gates. I found little difficulty in retracing the way we came this morning, and soon found myself standing on the San Lorenzo steps, surrounded by a wildly gesticulating group of bare-footed boatmen. My man picked out, I soon found myself scudding over the waters of the Harbour, here and there making a *detour* to the right or left, to avoid running against the side of some giant man-of-war or formidable torpedo boat. It is in a place such as this that one gets an opportunity of fully realising the *Greatness* of Britain.

Passing on my left the old *Malamer*, which sails for India in the morning with the "Borderers," I found myself landed, within a quarter of an hour after leaving the San Lorenzo steps, at the Porta Victoria, by the Custom House, in Valetta.

Having paid the boatman his moderate demand of fourpence, and made inquiries as to the direction of the principal street, I was soon puffing away at the ascent of a long line of steps with houses to either side, which an inscription tells me is the Strada Santa Lucia. Byron's farewell to Valetta, which I had read just before leaving England, came into my head, and I cannot help agreeing that the noble bard sings truly here:—

" Adieu, ye joys of La Valette ;
Adieu Sirocco, sun, and sweat ;

*Adieu, ye cursed streets of stairs,
How surely he who mounts you swears,
Adieu, ye females fraught with graces !
Adieu, red-coats and redder faces,
Adieu, the supercilious air,
Of all that strut 'en militaire.' "*

Made first for the Post Office in the Strada Mercanti, in search of a letter from home. Thought, perhaps, I should have got this letter at Gibraltar, but we did not put in there at all. Disappointed at finding the Post Office closed.

Within three minutes of the Strada Mercanti you get into the Strada Reale, a very fine street, straight and level, with a handsome show of shops. At one end of this, the principal street of Valetta, is the Governor's Palace, an imposing looking edifice, and the Main Guard-Room, fronted by a handsome square ; at the other end is the Porta Reale, which marks the boundary of the city proper of Valetta, and beyond which lies the suburb of Floriana. As this, my first view of Valetta, was by night, I was only open to the reception of general impressions. It is simply a good-sized Italian-looking town, abounding in churches—that of St. John's is, of course, famous—and *cafés*, with a veneer of modern English colouring. The middle and upper classes of Malta speak Italian, which is the language of commerce, of the Courts of Justice, and of the Governor's proclamations, but nearly all the shops have English notices, beneath Italian or Maltese names. The English here, however, as might naturally be expected, do not form a Colony. They

are simply a Garrison. The Valetta tradesmen have not to deal with wealthy Englishmen, residing here for pleasure or for benefit of their health, as in the case of the *Colonies* of Paris, Rome, Florence, or the Riviera, and the well-dollared Yankee, strange to say, seems to be practically unknown here. Their English patrons are soldiers and sailors, commissioned and non-commissioned. With a view of attracting the custom of Private Thomas and his equivalent in the sister service, the *cafés*, in the lower quarters of Valetta, assume more and more the aspect of the ordinary English public-house, selling Allsopp and Guinness, as well as native wines. These establishments, however, seem to be generally brighter and more respectable looking than their English equivalents, and never altogether lose their continental appearance.

Into a *café*, which was thoroughly *continental*, I strayed shortly after my arrival in Valetta, and ordered something in the way of dinner. Whilst waiting for this latter to be served, the street door opened, and a figure, typically Maltese, presented itself to my somewhat astonished view. Into the centre of the room, holding his goat by a string in his hand, walked a native milkman, who, finding a customer behind the counter, at a moment's notice deliberately knelt down on the floor, and proceeded promptly to milk his goat in the presence of some dozen people, sipping their coffee, wine or cognac. Some of the London dairy companies should really take a "tip" from this indigenous islander, and give

some such similar public guarantee that adulteration is never practised by them. I must not forget to mention that the milkman's head-dress consisted of a soldier's sea-cap, possibly bought by him from one of the water-pedlars, who "changee-changeed" with us on board the *Malamer* this morning.

It was a new experience to me to speak French with a red-coat on, and the waiter in the Café de la Reine, a Maltese who had "picked up" the language in Algiers, told me I was the first soldier who had ever done so, to his knowledge. Of course it was simply *pour rire*, that I did speak French, as the waiter himself spoke English very well. I am determined, however, to avail myself, during our stay in Malta, of any and every opportunity I get to keep up my modern languages. It is really a most pleasing sensation to walk out of barracks here, and leave behind one everything that smacks of the barrack-room, except, of course, the uniform, and in its good effects on one is the next best thing to going home on furlough and once more reminding one's self of what one really is and should be, and of the necessity of keeping ever before one's mind, clear and distinct, the circumstances, aim and object of one's enlisting into the ranks.

This peculiarly agreeable feeling I felt even more strongly when, towards nine o'clock, I found myself sitting in one of the front seats of the stalls in the Teatro Manoel, listening to an Italian Comic Opera, "Fiametta." This little theatre, where Opera Comique alone is played, was only half full, and

amongst the audience I noticed some soldiers and sailors, who listened and followed the plot by the acting as best they could, without understanding, presumably, one word of the dialogue. Judging from the emptiness of the house, I cannot understand how it pays expenses, without receiving a Government subsidy, which, I believe, is not granted here. With such a large military and naval English-speaking population, one wonders, at first, that there is no English company here, but astonishment ceases when one thinks of the cost of bringing a company over from England, as compared with that of bringing one from Italy, only twenty-four hours away. The two Maltese theatres are, I believe, the cheapest in Europe. For a seat just behind the orchestra in the *stalli*, which corresponds to our pit stalls, I paid 1s. 6d. At the other theatre, the "Real," which is *the* theatre of Valetta, the prices are a little higher. This Theatre Royal is off the Strada Reale, and is a fine piece of architecture, in which the legitimate Italian opera is played by a really good company, during the whole season with the exception of Holy Week, when oratorios and sacred music occupy the attention of the house.

Leaving the theatre, before the performance was finished, I paid another visit to the 'Café de la Reine, and there ran right into Corporal C——, of the Connaught Rangers, son of a well-known Irish legal official. Only a few minutes before our thus unexpectedly meeting, I was wondering when I

should be able to pay him a visit at Pembroke Camp, which is at the other side of the harbour. It was a rather strange thing to meet one another, purely by accident, in a *café* in Valetta, on the very evening of my arrival in Malta, when it was hardly to be expected that I should find myself in Valetta at all. I was not the only one of our fellows out that night, however ; for C—— told me that he had just heard from one of his own men that several of the new arrivals had lost no time in showing off their fresh English faces in the capital of Malta. We had a long chat, discussed old times and present prospects of promotion, comparing the existing state of things in one regiment with the other, and at last said " Good-night " at the Custom House, where he and I, each stepping into a boat, went off on our different ways by water. As my Maltese boatman rowed me over the dark water of the harbour—after the Valetta clocks had struck or rather chimed eleven—keeping up a low continuous whisper in Maltese with his other fare, a fellow-countryman of his own, I could not help thinking of all that I had heard of native treachery, and remembered the case of the murdered soldier, in which a Maltese boatman was found guilty, and which was so loudly discussed in the English papers about twelve months ago.¹

¹ One hears a great deal, at home, of the cowardly, treacherous disposition of the Maltese lower classes. During my short stay in Malta, I always found them civil and obliging, and not more dishonest than they might be, or than people elsewhere not unfrequently are.

Safe and secure, however, with a smile and a "Good-night, Corrrporral" from the two Maltese, I landed on the San Lorenzo steps once more, and just as the midnight hour pealed forth and my non-commissioned officer's permanent pass expired, stood outside the great heavy gate of Verdala Barracks. Was it all a dream? Six months after I had enlisted, I gave up occasionally wondering to myself whether I really was a soldier, and looking strangely at my red coat as if to convince me of that undeniable fact. Now the old wonder came back again. Valetta, dinner in the *café*, speaking French — though this time not in conventional attire on the Boulevard des Italiens, or in my old *apartment* of three years ago within a stone's throw of the garden of the Luxembourg—the Theatro Manoel and Fiametta, all kept swimming through my brain. Was it merely a masquerading in red? Was it simply for a "lark," or was I playing a soldier in some private theatricals? Was the *Malammer* then but a disturbed dream, the outcome of fevered fancy? But no, this latter was too real not to be true. I should satisfy myself on the subject, however, once and for all. I tapped loudly with my cane against the barrack gates. There was no mistaking the now, to me, familiar tones of the Blankford warrior on "sentry-go" on dry, if foreign, land. "Halt! Who comes there?" rang out the challenge in stentorian accents on the clear night air. "Friend," I found myself exclaiming almost unconsciously, as if just awaking from a sleep.

"Gate!"

It opens.

A rapid movement of his rifle as he brings it from "port" to "shoulder," and a "Pass friend, all's well," from him—

From me,

"Good-night!"

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF THE MEDITERRANEAN.

Tuesday, 23rd December 1890.

ONCE more we are on the seas. There is no rest for the wicked. None! Once more begin afresh our travels and our travails. Once more on board a troopship. Strange to say it is once more the *Malamer*, and we are glad of it.

This time we are sailing *away* with a vengeance—bound for far Hindostan. We soldiers seem to have always had the reputation of being somewhat fickle in our affections, if our country's bards sing truly:—

“One foot on shore and one on sea,
Men were deceivers ever.”

As regards the military *men* of the Blankford Light Infantry, I am afraid the fickleness is being proved beyond a doubt. We were quite in love with our little Mediterranean station at first, but now, after a stay of not quite twelve months in Malta, we are longing to be far away from it. We are sighing for fresh (query *fresh*) fields and

pastures (query *pastures*) new, and yearning for distant India, and we are sailing thither as fast as the good ship *Malamer* can carry us.

Since we left Malta at midday last Saturday there has been nothing whatever to chronicle—no land in sight—and we have all settled down quietly to our, now by no means strange, duties on board. Everything comes so much easier to us this time. The old ship is the same, and yet seems so different. We know our way about her so well now, and we have come on board provided with proper sea-kits.¹ Altogether we feel more comfortable than we did on our trip out last February. We are even chummy with the sailors, who are not nearly so patronising as they used to be. Last, but not least, the canteen prices are decidedly lower, under a new manager, another colour-sergeant of marines, who seems a jolly, good-natured, obliging kind of man, resembling his predecessor in nothing except his extreme fatness.

The first land we sight is Egypt. Yesterday I leaned over the port side, and wished we sailed near enough to the Greek Isles to get a glimpse in passing.

¹ For the shorter trip out to Malta, sea-kits are [not issued] to the troops, although adding greatly to the comfort of all. The stoppages made out of the soldier's pay for the Indian sea-kits referred to here, has always been the source of much discontent in a regiment arriving in India. It is interesting to note [that the Secretary of State for War has just announced that after the present trooping season (1891-92), the sea-kits will be issued to the soldiers free of charge.

"The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece,
Where burning Sappho loved and sung."

"Huntingdon," said I to my batman, who was standing by me, "do you know Sappho?"

"Sappho, sergeant;¹ what company does he belong to? You don't mean that there queer recruit wot used to stop in No. 16 room. Oh, no! it was 'Punto' they christened him when he came up. I reckon they ought to give that there bloke 'is ticket for being daft. Sergeant, I never saw a man as 'ad such a hawful appetite as—"

"Sappho," I interjected, "an awful appetite! perhaps."

"Well, if it's that there man as you mean, I never seen a hawfuller one, as 'e 'ad. 'E listed for 'is pound, an' 'e wasn't ashamed to show everybody as 'ow 'e meant to 'ave it too."

"Oh, I was speaking of a lady. She's dead now, and you've never heard of her."

Sympathetic silence.

My batman, Huntingdon, is a thoroughly good fellow—so original—and his ignorance is perfectly refreshing. He has not even the slightest semblance of that little learning which is a dangerous thing. An instance: about three weeks ago he was telling me about something that had taken place in the Strada Santa Lucia in Valetta.

"Huntingdon," I said, "do you know what Santa means?"

¹ I had been appointed lance-sergeant towards the end of our stay in Malta.

"Saint, ain't it?"

"Yes," I said, for once amazed at him.

"And what's a saint?" I hazarded.

"Some big man or another. Some Honourable. I once worked for an Honourable as lived just ten miles from Oxford."

"Are you sure the Honourable was a saint?"

"I reckon so. Something that way. Look here, sergeant, that man had so much money comin' into him that when he got up i' the mornin' if you hasked 'im i' the middle o' the day, wot 'e'd 'ave 'fore night 'e couldn't tell you."

I was not surprised at the man's not understanding a question so mixed as that would seem.

Huntingdon proceeded: "No sooner 'ad 'e 'eard that I'd gone and 'listed, than 'e wanted to buy me out."

"He did, the holy man?" said I.

"Ah! to be sure; wot am I thinking on? Me brains is all topsy-turvy like since ever the route's a-come in. Well, a saint's a religious bloke, aint 'e', sergeant? There's lots of them there people in the Bible."

He had had an inspiration.

Whenever poor Huntingdon says anything particularly original like this and detects me in a smile, the conversation flags for a minute or two. He then looks shyly up, and I always know what he is going to say.

"Sergeant, when do you reckon to get your commission? They ought to be giving it to you before long, I reckon."

Then he expresses his honest opinion that it must be strange for the *likes* of me to be talking to the *likes* of him.

"Do you know what it is, sergeant? If I was like you and got somethin' comin' in regular to me, and not dependin' for a livin' on my regimental pay like, and I had your scholarin' and headpiece, the Blankfords might whistle for a long time afore they caught me for a recruit."

"And why? Don't you like being a soldier? I wouldn't be anything else. You say yourself, you wouldn't let that Honourable buy you out."

"Oh, I like soldierin' well enough, when it *is* soldierin,'" ¹ with a knowing wink he had acquired from an *old* soldier of his room, and a jerk of the right thumb over the right shoulder. "Besides, I want to see a bit of the world, and I've 'card a deal about them there Indies. I must go to India afore my seven's in. I'll chance the Deolali Tap"²

¹ A very favourite expression with young soldiers of perhaps no more than twelve months' service, who wish to be considered smart. What their precise idea of soldiering is, it would be rather hard to tell. They are fond of imitating old soldiers, who are wont to inform them, as occasion arises, that soldiering was soldiering in their days, and lament the decay of discipline. The soldier is always *laudator temporis acti*.

² In the Atkinsonian mythology there exists a nondescript individual, presumably of human—as opposed to divine—attributes, who has his headquarters at Deolali, the great depôt, in the Bombay Presidency. He holds a mallet in his hand, and gives each soldier (officers included) passing through the depôt, a 'tap as he goes by. Some, it seems, are harder hit than others, but none escape completely. Hence it comes to pass that while some who have long soldiered in India are clearly *non compotes mentis*,

this time. Why, if a bloke went 'ome to my part and said as 'ow 'e'd been a soldier for seven years and 'e'd never been abroad, the people 'id be that there wild wid him, that they'd pelt him for showin' up the county an' comin' back a disgrace to them. 'That they would."

I believe they were all like Huntingdon; once having left England they all wanted to go further afield and see India. Huntingdon was like the others, however, in this respect alone. Always scrupulously clean and smart enough in his way, he made a very fair duty soldier and an excellen batman. He will never become an "old soldier," long as he may stay in India. A recruit of three months' standing would be a thousand times "*flyer*," to use the barrack-room expression, than poor Huntingdon will ever be. Perhaps this is one of his good points. Huntingdon is, for better or worse, what those ultra-democratic American young ladies, who tell you that they speak *United States* not English, and who prefer for many reasons Paris to London, would style decidedly "fresh."

"Huntingdon!"

"Yes, sergeant."

"Do you know that this is your last day in Europe?"

A look of interrogation.

others are simply and slightly eccentric—in the opinion, be it observed, of recruits and feather-bed wallahs, who have never left England.

"You know England is not Europe. There are other places in Europe besides England—Malta, for instance; you are in Europe now. To-morrow you will have left it. You will see both Asia and Africa—Egypt and the Suez Canal to-morrow."

"Egypt! Do you reckon we'll 'be there to-morrow. I'd just like to land there and wallop into them there Niggers. Do you reckon we'll see any of them, sergeant? Well, I had a cousin—well, he was only a left-handed kind of cousin—let me see now, 'is step-sister was married' to my huncle, what do you reckon that 'id be, by proper rights to me. Well, anyway, 'e was in Egypt. 'E's got the medal with three bars to it. 'E went through the whole of the Sow-dan and Egypt."

"Well, to-morrow you will be able to say you have been in Egypt yourself."

CHAPTER II.

THROUGH THE CANAL.

Wednesday, 24th December 1890.

WAKE up this morning and find all motion ceased and a general stillness everywhere prevailing, which is only broken in upon now and then by a low hum of voices, rising, apparently, from the water on either side of us. A glance out of the port-holes convinces us that we are at last in Egypt, anchored in the Suez Canal, off Port Said. The scene, in some respects, is Oriental beyond a doubt.

There are some black, or at any rate very dark men, strangely attired in flowing garments—some with turbans, others Turkish fez-caps on their heads—walking about the Canal-side street, within almost hailing distance of us. As to Port Said itself, as seen from the deck of our trooper—and one can see little more on land, I understand—there is not very much to be said of it. A row of two-storied houses, which look very *wooden* from here, and which all boast of bright-coloured shutters or verandah-railings, running parallel with the Canal, and forming in one straight line a continuation of

the breakwater, which marks its Mediterranean entrance.

The buildings can hardly be said to be Eastern in type. They are in structure and in outward appearance for all the world like those of a second-rate French provincial town. The Grand Café Continental is placarded straight before us, standing beside the Port Said Branch of the Anglo-Egyptian Bank. A long straight street, at right angles to this, seems to run away deserted to a hazy nowhere. Here and there the Egypt of Anglo-French interference is smartly represented by a blue-coated policeman, who stands erect like a statue amongst the slowly moving Oriental throng. Every now and then a European or two files past us down the street. Who could mistake the French bourgeois man of commerce? In every quarter of the globe he is the same—dark and stout, carelessly attired in ill-fitting clothes of sombre hue, with tall hat of narrowest brim, and everlasting cigarette in mouth.

Shortly after breakfast the low hum of voices gradually swells into a din and clattering of tongues. The Arab boatmen, not at all unlike their Maltese brothers, are all around us. Some of the officers go ashore, and there is a fierce struggle for their custom amongst the boatmen. Seems almost ridiculous to have to hire a boat at all. Looks as if a good hop, step, and jump would bring you ashore, with nothing worse than a wet foot or two. As a matter of fact, a Marine orderly steps deftly from

boat to boat, as they lie close together, and skilfully dodging the oarsmen, reaches the land, without expending the smallest known coin on the transit.

Arabs look annoyed at him, but what does he care! The soldiers on board are highly amused. They are even proud of their countryman for having done such a something-or-other *fly* thing in *dusting over* such a something-or-other lot of Niggers in this droll fasion. In fact, we all feel disposed to sing "Rule Britannia," and ask the Arabs for piastres at the end of it. Poor Arabs!

Soon men, undoubtedly dark of face, board the Trooper, and then begins that most dreadful of all agonies in ship-life, the agony of *coaling*. These Arabs add to the agony. Confound them! They are working hard—harder even than the Maltese, I think—and all the time they are wailing monotonously. It is a way they have. Working and wailing, like restless souls lamenting a lost happiness! It is really too dreadful; but we should really be glad of it—the more they wail the more they work, and the more they work the sooner we shall begin to glide, between the banks, past Egypt.

"Good, me hearties! Good on you!" shouts a Blankford Briton.

"Perish me everlasting pink, if you won't have that tanner well earned afore yer finished. Well, strike me hurrah, if I'll begrudge it to you for one!" cries a Cockney *militaire*.

"'Be the piper that played afore Moses,' and as will as I can rimimber he was a black piper, an'

I'm not too sure about Moses, afore he lid thim Israyeelites across the Suez Canal, yiz are all entitled to a chape wet out of the canteen funds. So y' are the whole black kit of ye." The speaker was an undoubted European belonging to a draft of the Ballyhooly Fusiliers.

The Arab is not aware he is being addressed, and goes on humming and hissing in Arabic, working with a will. Surely these people—these particular Anglo-French-Italo-Turkish degraded Arabs of the Canal-side—are not altogether devoid of energy. I suppose, though an access of energy means degradation to an Arab—and it is the Arabs who are *not* degraded—the wanderers of the desert, who are lazy and romantic. Query!

At last the coaling is over, and the Arabs disperse chattering more loudly than ever, but singing no longer. A few hawkers come on board now. They speak a little broken English, and they sell curios of all kinds and photographs of the land of the Pharoahs, its pyramids, its deserts, its grand old Nile, and its great Canal. Stowed away, half out of sight, beneath these, are works of art, which have not even the dubious reputation of being of *questionable* character—a special product, it seems, of Port Said. Has it not the reputation of being far-in-a-way the most degraded small 'spot, within easy reach of Europe, where the vices of the East and West commingle? Here is all my guide-book says of it:—

"Owing to its position, Port Said offers many

facilities to tourists desirous of visiting Syria or the Holy Land and the Ports of the Levant, while the different communications now afforded by the newly extended service of the P. and O. Company, both outwards and homewards, render this *point de départ* especially convenient for different routes. Port Said offers advantages to Egyptian travellers coming direct from England by sea or by shorter Continental routes, there being daily communication *via* Ismailia for Cairo and the Nile, by an excellent service of postal boats and trains."

Before mid-day we have left Port Said and all belonging to it some distance behind, and we are gliding softly down between Asia and Africa, from sea to sea. There is something soothing about this waveless motion. It is also a grand thing for bad sailors—and, perhaps, the majority of good soldiers are included in the category—to feel confident that they cannot be sea-sick for forty-eight hours or so.¹ Altogether, I should say, this is about the most pleasant part of the voyage. To begin with, you see where you are and where you are going, but on the open sea you only surmise it, and hope there is no mistake. I speak of the uninitiated, of course.

There are actually little signboards all along the line marking distances. What the figures mean—whether they represent miles or kilometres, or at

¹ By the way, since we left Malta I have not seen one case of sea-sickness, but then the sea has been exceptionally calm and the weather delightful.

what end the reckoning commences—I cannot feel sure, as I am not at present on speaking terms with anybody who could inform me. Had half a notion of walking boldly up to the Naval Officer of the Watch and telling him I was thirsting for information.

The Canal here, it seems, between Port Said and Kantara, is at its widest, spreading out to between three and four hundred feet. Its uniform depth is 26 feet. Here and there at the commencement the banks cease to be clearly defined, the sea forming little bays on either side. Opposite signpost $\frac{7\frac{2}{3}}$ we find ourselves passing one of those picturesque little *gares* or sidings built along the Canal at intervals of five miles. In the event of two ships coming in opposite directions, one moors up alongside these stations to enable the other to pass.

Balls hoisted on a pole outside the station-house inform the French pilot, who came on board at Port Said, whether the way is clear between this and the next station. It is clear, and we quietly proceed. Most of the Canal station-houses are inhabited by Frenchmen. This particular one seems to be kept by Arabs, some of whom, of both sexes, are looking at us, red-coated soldiers, from the garden attached to their snug-looking little dwelling-house. The soldiers themselves seem interested. The picturesqueness of the scene seems to be dawning on their minds, and they are unusually silent. I look round for Huntingdon,

anxious to know what he thinks of it all, but he is nowhere to be found.

Soon heavy-looking barges, such as one might see any day on a canal at home, pulled by a long-suffering horse, lie hauled up on the ground. Here the narrow Canal begins again, the banks being very clearly defined, and only the normal distance apart, but still the sea forms two narrow bays on either side, the *gare* itself being built on the peninsula formed between the bay on the star-board side and the Canal itself. Distant view of an encampment across the sands, on the other side of this little bay, with a few palm trees round it.

Now we get opposite to quite a large village on the Arabian side. It is Kantara, twenty-five miles down the Canal from Port Said, and a rather important place, I believe, in its way—in its very “tinpot” way, as a non-commissioned officer to whom I am delivering a short lecture on our whereabouts and our *whatabouts* chimes in. There is a bridge of sorts, which can be spanned across the Canal at will, and over which the Arabs cross from Asia to Africa when so inclined, and the pilgrim-caravans from Egypt go Meccawards at holy times. All the inhabitants are away somewhere to-day, and the wooden village in the sands looks romantically bleak and deserted. After this the banks are so very close, and the great Canal seems so narrow; it is hardly more than twice the width of one sluggishly flowing through some

green and peaceful countryside at home. At this point we pass one or two of those great dredges used for cleaning purposes.

• Telegraph wires run parallel with the banks, and the railway (from Suez to Port Said, I suppose) is quite close. Every now and then a few types of the inhabitants appear upon the banks. Our fellows shout at them, and they shout and grin in return. A little lower down a whole group of them stand by the water's edge—three Arabs and a Soudanese Nigger, black as sin. They are saying something to us, but we can only understand the one word "backsheesh." Some of the soldiers throw lumps of bread on the ground, and the natives toss one another about the sand, struggling for possession. One man runs alongside of us for about two miles, clammering for "backsheesh." He is disappointed in the end. Occasionally they make gestures which, if reproduced on the stage of a London music-hall, would have had the County Council interposing. These Arabs of the banks are, beyond doubt, a very degraded type of humanity. Fourteen miles below Kantara, we reach the Station of El Guisr. Here the banks on the Arabian side are quite steep, and the Canal itself curves a great deal.

Deflections of this kind from the generally straight line present the only difficulty, I believe, in the navigation of the Suez, rendering, as they do, the grounding of ships a comparatively frequent occurrence. An enormous sum of money has lately

been spent in rectifying these curves, and much has already been accomplished in this way.

Passed a French steamer, the *Yarra*, of Marseilles, about one to-day—the French ensign dipping three times in salute to us. Long conversation with a sergeant (educated) of Hussars on the saluting question. Wanted to make out that we, with undisputed pre-eminence on the seas, were first saluted by foreigners, and never saluted first. Asked no less than three petty officers and the master-at-arms, and all seemed to be more or less of the same opinion as the Hussar, though they allowed that, in the event of one of our battle-ships meeting a foreign man-of-war, with a commander of higher rank, we might pay the first compliment, by way of courtesy. Find, on reference to my P. and O. Guide—a handy little volume, replete with information—that, in the year 1887, out of a total of 3,137 ships that passed through the Suez Canal, no less than 2,330 were vessels hailing from the United Kingdom. France, with a total of 185, comes next, and is followed by Germany with 159, Italy with 138, and Holland with 123. Then there is a great dropping off, and a rivalry for the last place between America, with three, Japan two, and little Belgium with one solitary ship. Strange to say, the very country through which the Canal flows, according to this return, only passed five merchantmen, though her Suzerain, Turkey, sent nineteen.

We do not carry the electric search-light, and,

so, according to the rules of the Canal Company, we have to stop steaming, for safety's sake, at dusk.

About six o'clock, accordingly, down goes the boat with a warrant officer and a party of sailors, holding on to the chain slackened out to them from the deck.

Around a stump of wood on the Arabian side the chain is quickly coiled, and the sailors, wading through the water near the bank in their bare legs, with tucked-up trousers, row back in the boat, and we are hauled up securely for the night.

Thursday, 25th December 1890.

Christmas day, and as hot as the hottest midsummer's day in England! We unmoor early, and resume our journey. At church service this morning an appropriate reference is made to the Great Event, which fixes days and dates for all the European peoples, and which directly or indirectly regulates their national laws and social customs, and the scene of which lies not very far from here.

Over there, trotting across the barren sands, is a veritable Arab of the desert, mounted on his camel, with musket slung behind. Before he is out of sight, we pass slowly by a *gare*, and the French family who occupy it, turn out—father, mother, and children, with Arab servant in rear—and wave their salutations to us. They are saying something, but we cannot catch the words,—presumably a Christmas greeting. Christian and Mussulman, Frank and Arab; cosy, civilised habi-

tation, and bleak, far-stretching desert, with a long-striding camel, thrown in haphazard! What a strange picture! And who are looking at this picture, unframed, but living? A regiment of young soldiers, some of whom, a couple of years ago, before they enlisted, had never passed beyond the bounds of their native county in England,—standing wondering at it all, this Christmas morning, from the deck of the Trooper.

“Looked at from a merely graphic point of view, the Suez Canal may hardly present features of the most striking kind. Even as a monument of engineering skill, it might not be considered in the highest sense as impressive. It is not carried over high mountains, nor through rock-bound channels. Its moderate currents have not to be confined by Titanic masonry. It impresses one, perhaps, chiefly as being the achievement of one persevering and indomitable mind, and an achievement pregnant with great results and vaster possibilities.

“But the *genus loci* is also present in another and a different shape. It is Egypt, the most ancient historic land known to us, and every mile of the Canal passes through a region enriched by the memory of events of surpassing interest. We are on the border-land of the Delta, and across this plain, 4,000 years ago, Abraham wandered from far-away Ur of the Chaldees. Looking out on the Lake of Menzaleh, we know that, beyond that sheet of water, there lie the ruins of Tanis, the ancient Zoan, where Moses

performed his miracles; and near the end of Timsah, or the Bitter Lakes, the host of Pharaoh perished through the sudden rising of the south-west gale. The Persian, Greek and Roman conquerors swept across this desert. Away on the north side of the Canal are the ruins of Pelusium, whence an ancient canal once joined the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, and by that waterway Cleopatra sought to retreat with her treasures after the defeat of Actium. Forty centuries look down upon a scene now steeped in the very essence of modern invention. The massive iron-clad, with its complicated artillery; the splendid mail steamer, with powerful engines, sailing through the desert, with the electric light serving as its pillar of fire; the numberless fleet of vessels, laden with the produce of skilled invention, as well as the natural gifts of every clime,—everything, in short, that the science of the present day can bring to bear on industry and commerce—now passes along a path which is, and ever must be, associated in the mind with an age so different and so remote. The Canal links together in sweeping contrast the great past and the greater present, pointing to a future which we are as little able to divine as were the Pharaohs or Ptolemies of old to forecast the wonders of the nineteenth century.”¹

Within an hour after starting this morning, we passed by Ismailia, where the Canal forms a

¹ “The Suez Canal.” By Thomas Sutherland. (P. & O. Guide.)

kind of basin. Ismailia is an important Egyptian railway centre; and the Khedive has a palace here, hid behind a cluster of trees, on the Canal bank. It was at Ismailia that we landed the greater part of our troops during the Egyptian Campaign, and at no great distance from here one comes upon now historic battle-fields. On the banks of the Canal, between this and Suez, there was a good deal of desultory fighting. There is a soldier belonging to one of the drafts here, who happened to be on board a troopship outward-bound, which was delayed a considerable time, until the result of an expected engagement in the vicinity was made known.

For the eight miles traversed between the *gare* of El Guisr and Ismailia, the Canal runs on in an almost straight line, and the country is flat and almost destitute of anything that could afford substantial cover to an enemy. A steamer or two, well armed, here, from the Canal itself, could do an incalculable amount of injury to troublesome parties of Arabs on the desert, and secure the banks to us for a good stretch of country.

Four miles beyond Ismailia we get to the station of Toussom, and here the Canal curves sharply. An Arab enemy at this point, extended along the high sand-banks would, with his supports and reserves lying snugly concealed in the hollow behind, I should say, command the Canal for miles.

Eight miles beyond Toussom commence the Bitter Lakes. Here, for nearly twenty miles, we

find ourselves on a sand-skirt sea, and we are able to put on steam between the posts which mark out our route, thus compensating, to some extent, for the time lost in the slow sail through the desert yesterday. Once out of the Bitter Lakes, we have only a trifle of thirty miles to get over to satisfactorily account for the grand total of eighty-six miles allowed to the Suez Canal. We are not destined, however, to issue from it to-day, for the shades of evening had already gained upon us before we had reached the other end. It was close enough though, for there to our right front, across the unusually watery-looking sands, glimmered the lights of Suez town, with its flat-roofed houses lying sheltered by the mountains, which, it seems, are famous for the brilliant play of light and colour usually observable upon them here.

"The direct transit of the mails," says the P. and O. Guide, "through the Canal has deprived Suez of much of its importance in connection with the overland route, as even passengers proceeding only to Cairo and Upper Egypt are landed at Ismailia. The Suez Canal enters the Gulf of Suez $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile S.E. of the town, passing Port Tewfic and Port Ibrahim to the northward—the former has the Canal office, works, etc., and the latter, the arsenal, the Government workshops, dry docks, etc. Suez Roads or anchorage is immediately off the entrance to the Canal. The town stands in the middle of a sandy plain at the northern extremity of the gulf or end of the Red Sea. Beyond its vicinity to

sacred localities it has no attractions. The sweet-water canal, constructed in connection with the works of the Suez Canal, terminates here in a large lock, and in its immediate neighbourhood a certain amount of vegetation has sprung up, but beyond this not a single tree or shrub is to be seen—nothing but an expanse of yellow stone and sand. The heat of summer is great, but the winter climate is remarkably fine and dry, with bright sunny days and cold nights. Some invalids even prefer Suez to the other parts of Egypt, and find tolerable accommodation at the hotel."

Latitude 29° 58' N.; Longitude 32° 54' E.; Population, 11,000. Distance from London by sea, 3,352 miles.

Hardly are we pulled up to the bank than a whole troop of donkey boys come galloping over the sand, and drew up in line before us.

"Donkey, danky, dunkey, dinkey," they cry in varying keys, "plenty good and plenty quick." Some of the officers go ashore and try their merits.

Meantime the Christmas festivities on the quarter-deck begin. We must have something in lieu of the time-honoured Christmas pantomime, and, failing clown and harlequin, with elaborate transformation scene, we are content to amuse ourselves, and we succeed in doing so with the *Malamer Nigger Minstrel Troupe*, on the quarter-deck stage. The pantomime topical song was not a feature of the excellently rendered programme, but the topical joke was not forgotten.

Question—What is the difference between the soldiers of the Blankford Light Infantry and the camels of the desert?

Answer—One can work for a week without drinking, and the other can drink for a week without working.

The gallant blue-jacket who indulged in this cheap form of wit, should really have considered that while he had his rum served out to him to-day, the poor soldier was unable, even on presentation of a *chit* signed by an officer, to get as much as one glass of beer.

At the performance this evening one or two of the ladies—they were in greater force on board this time than on the journey out to Malta—sang to the accompaniment of a piano-playing bandsman of ours. Everybody seemed to be in high spirits, and although the soldiers had had little roast beef or turkey, and the whisky-punch was wished for in vain, while the hot sun of Egypt dispensed with the necessity of the yule-log, the fact that it was, none the less, Christmas Day, was remembered both in song and speech, while the spirit in which the audience received the singing of "Far from the Old Folks at Home," showed clearly that they themselves were not forgetting, if themselves forgot.

After the performance I had a stroll round the deck. All was still outside. The dreary music of the waves beating against the vessel's side we had left behind us with the sea. Below us water and sand was all that was to be seen between the two dark

continents, to either of which I could have safely swum with ease: the moon on high shining peacefully somewhere over there not far from the spot, where happened the Great Fact which has given this day its name. Thus ended my first Christmas on board ship, and my first out of Europe, as it is also my first—though I have been, now, just three years enlisted—spent in uniform with soldiers.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE RED SEA.

Saturday, 27th December 1890.

THOUGH off Suez, and at the very entrance of the Gulf, on Christmas night, did not get out of the Canal quite so soon as expected.

Yesterday morning, found ourselves aground in the shallow, near the right bank of the Canal. A passing steamer, during the night, stirring up the water against the other side of the ship, was responsible for this. Great working of ropes and shifting to and fro of troops, by way of easing the ship and helping us to get off. After vigorous efforts on the part of crew and troops, we manage to get under weigh by eight o'clock.

A party of noisy, chattering Arabs on the bank caused considerable merriment. They shouted at us the name of almost all the principal celebrities and notorieties in England. "Hallo, Johnny, you all right! you Grand Old Man! you Lord Rrrrrrandolph! Mistress Langtry! Parrrrrrnell."

It grieves me to narrate that the Grand Old Man and Jack the Ripper were more than once coupled together by a particularly villainous-

looking Nubian, whose English vocabulary seemed to be confined to the names of these celebrities. It would be interesting to learn where these natives acquired the knowledge they displayed. Is it possible that they would be able to rattle off those glib tongues of theirs the names of eminent Parisians with equal ease, for the particular edification of the soldiers of a French troopship passing by here? I should say so. Down through the Gulf of Suez, find the mountains, on the African side bold, upright and clear in outline, while on the Arabian side, from this, they present the appearance of mere sandhills. A ship's corporal volunteers the information to me that we are passing Mount Sinai, at the same time pointing to a prominence on the African side. On my suggesting that most evidence pointed to the famous place being on the other side, he, without a smile or consciousness of humour, declared that it *used to be on* the other side, but that it had lately been changed. This was *not* an Irishman.

We have now got well out into the open (Red) sea, and finished completely with canal and gulf. At 8.30 A.M., after I had fallen-in my watch, we had altogether lost sight of African land, while on the Arabian side, we passed quite close to the strange-looking little rocks, commonly known as The Two Brothers, which, like two great slabs of stone on the surface of the water, lie just one nautical mile apart. At nine o'clock we were sailing at the rate of twelve and a half knots an hour, but we must

have increased our speed considerably during the day, for by 3.50 P.M. we sighted the Daedalus Lighthouse, which is one hundred and one miles from the Brothers. This queerly situated lighthouse is built on a coral reef, and takes its name from an ill-fated vessel, which ran to destruction against the reef some years ago. As the surface of the coral is some two or three feet of water below the base of the Lighthouse, the latter stands bold upright, by itself, in the sea, on apparently no support whatever. Quite close to the reef the water is between two hundred and forty and two hundred and fifty fathoms deep. It can easily be imagined how exceedingly dangerous it must have been for navigation here by night before this warning light was fixed up in the open sea. A ship might find itself in a dense column of water, apparently quite safe from danger, the most remote, at one moment, and at the next, without any warning, be shattered against the water-hidden reef.

The Daedalus is six hundred and fifty-three miles from Jebel Teir, the next land sighted. What a delightful abode for the lighthouse keeper and his family! An iron pillar, seventy feet in height, on a coral reef, in the middle of the Red Sea, upwards of three hundred miles from Suez, which is, I suppose, about the nearest civilised place! *Query*—Do these people have to get their provisions from Suez? If so, their daily bill-of-fare must be even considerably worse than that

of the troopship. Perhaps, however, Providence, tempering the wind to the shorn lamb, provides these not-to-be-envied-ones with teeth sharp beyond the ordinary, capable of sawing through even unusually long-stored sea-biscuits and leather-like meat.

Just now, at four o'clock, it is as hot as one ever has it on the hottest day in England, and this is but two days after Christmas! The awning is now all up, and is to be left up until the ship once more reaches this place, homeward-bound. This is a consolation, as it is a perfect nuisance to have the Watch—even the Watches off duty—called up three or four times a day to pull this awning up and down. During the passage through the Canal, all the Watches were continually being called upon to help at the ropes, and the soldiers were “paying out” and working round the capstan, like sailors to the manner born.

In these warm latitudes, nearly all the troops, and many of the sailors, stretch themselves at night on the upper deck, and sleep there *à la belle étoile*. Our bearings, taken at twelve noon to-day, were as follows:—Latitude, $25^{\circ} 39'$ W.; longitude, $35^{\circ} 15'$ E. Since yesterday, at twelve, we have made good three hundred and nine miles, and we are now distant two thousand, six hundred and fifty-nine miles from Bombay.

Sunday, 28th December 1890.

Beautiful day. Church service on the poop. Believe it is generally held here in the tropics

—English rendering of *Venite adoremus*. At about 9.45 we stopped steaming, the bearings of the engines becoming too heated for further work. What a difference this to the rate of progress of last night! Then, when the reel was last thrown out, we were making thirteen knots per hour, and, I believe, at one time yesterday, actually registered fourteen knots. This increased speed was probably the result of a desire on the part of the captain to make up for the few hours unavoidably lost when we ran aground in the Suez Canal. Now, it seems probable that, in the middle of the Red Sea, with fully three hundred fathoms of water beneath us, we shall be compelled to lose a little more time, all on account of the undue heating of those bearings. More haste, worse speed! It is interesting in these days of highly-wrought machinery to see the fast-going steamship suddenly transformed, for the nonce, into the ordinary sailing vessel of years ago. Read in the wheel-room, stretched on the deck, book from the ship's library—*Frank Mildmay, the Naval Officer*—one of Marryat's—thrashy.

In terrible distress, on learning that I have managed to pass the coast by Suakim, on the African side, just as I had passed the Island of Shadwan and Mount Sinai, without noticing these places. I am now the recognised chronicler of the *Malamer* and her trips. It is generally known that my notes of the last trip, at the beginning of the year, found their way into print, and now,

covered with the majesty of the Third Estate, I am allowed to go wherever I like about the ship, unchallenged by sentries, military or naval. If a rock, however uninteresting-looking, comes upon the horizon, at least a dozen men are deputed to inform me in time of its approaching presence lest, perchance, it might otherwise escape my notice. Some funny fellow amongst the non-coms. just now tried to spread a rumour that the ship had stopped steaming, simply because I was not quite satisfied with my description of the "Daedalus," and was swimming over there, notebook in hand, to complete it on the spot. I proceeded promptly to frighten the man by telling him that I was about to take an instantaneous photograph of him in the act of telling a deliberate lie in the Red Sea, and that, of course, he would subsequently be reproduced in book-form.

In future, I think, I must adopt the editorial *we* in speaking to people on board here and sink my personality a little. Just now have myself been looking for Fidus Achates in search of definite information as to our whereabouts. Find him, at last, on the table of the mess-deck, peacefully sleeping the Sunday sleep of the just sailor, so think it best not to disturb him. It is really amazing how this man Harris is able to localise so clearly all landmarks, however insignificant, passed by the Trooper, but it must be remembered that he has been serving on board her for the past five years, and has thus come to know every

feature of the interrupted coast line, and the name of every rock just discernible above the water's surface between the English Channel and the Indian Ocean. He is as familiar with the shore-points between Portsmouth and Bombay as a metropolitan railway guard is with the dim-lit stations between the Temple and South Kensington. Most sailors trouble themselves little about such questions of geography, and pass and repass places without exhibiting the slightest curiosity as to their whereabouts or names. We are, of a certainty, keeping to the letter the injunction against working on the Sabbath. The winds will not even furl our sails and the sea is calmly resting—its placid depths undisturbed by the faintest ripples, even, of the waters. The soldiers are allowed to cross the rope-barrier to the forecastle, and there army and navy, packed together like herrings, lie baking on deck in the Red Sea sun, which, in spite of the awning overhead, manages to assert its presence, by no means disagreeable.

In this state of holy rest or tropical apathy, whichever way you take it, the sea, ship, and souls on board her, remain the long day through, and when at last darkness descends upon us, we are forced to hoist the *uncontrollable lights* from the forecastle—three red lights at about 12 feet apart. Thus we signal to passing ships, if perchance there be any during the night, that we are no longer responsible for our actions, and that they must be accordingly doubly vigilant

Before night had properly set in, however, the heated machines had sufficiently cooled, and the good ship once more set her face steadfastly towards Hindostan, still many a long mile of water off.

Latitude, $21^{\circ} 55' N.$; longitude, $37^{\circ} 58' E.$ Made good 260 miles. Distance to Bombay, 2,395 miles.

Monday, 29th December 1890.

On duty all last night; relieved at eight this morning. Nothing to chronicle to-day. Nothing to be seen but a wide expanse of water. Ship ploughing away as usual. Since putting on steam last night, we have made good 226 miles—not bad—and are now only 427 miles from Perim, which marks the end of the Red Sea; Bombay 2,172 miles away, at the other side of the Indian Ocean. Bearings at noon:—Latitude, $18^{\circ} 36' N.$; longitude, $39^{\circ} 30' E.$

Tuesday, 30th December 1890.

Immediately after breakfast, ran up on deck to see if Harris's prediction would come about, that, at breakfast-time this morning, we should see land once more on the port side. Sure enough, at eight A.M., on the port side, was plainly to be seen the island of Jebel Teir, 200 miles from Perim, which is itself only 98 miles from Aden. Say that we are now just about 300 miles from Aden, we ought certainly to reach the latter between two and three to-morrow afternoon. This is the first *fiature* in

the ocean we have sighted since passing the Brothers' Rocks on Saturday last. Very oppressive to-day, indeed, in spite of the existence of a wind, commonly known to the sailors as the "Jebel Teir wind," which is really the north-east monsoon. In the Red Sea, according to the sailors, there are two winds to be met with, on the passage out to India. The first wind tends to help you a little towards your destination, while the other, which you invariably come in contact with about half-way through this Sea, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the island of Jebel Teir, blows directly against you, fighting a duel at close quarters with the other wind. I am assured that but for these opposing winds this particular quarter of the globe would be like a perpetual furnace. Must confess, while acknowledging the salutary effects of a wind unfelt, that I do not experience anything at all in the nature of a draught here; but for the information to the contrary, I should have imagined that this was the one place by land or water where the sovereignty of King Æolus was a dead letter.

Jebel Teir is about thirty-six miles from the Zebayer group of rocky islands commonly known as the "Twelve Apostles," which are themselves about twenty-six miles from the nearest point on the Arabian coast.

At Divisions this morning the sailors and marines paraded in white summer clothing, looking very neat and trim. Both marines and sailors had rifles and side-arms. Funny thing to see sailors in full

rig-out but minus boots ! There is one advantage about it, as one of our fellows remarked, they cannot well get "checked" for having used their blacking somewhat too sparingly. After inspection of the blue-jackets by one of their own lieutenants, stokers by an engineer officer, and marines by their own colour-sergeant, the sailors were dismissed, and the marines alone remained upon the quarter-deck. This little squad, consisting of three corporals and seventeen men, were then put through the Manual and Firing Exercises, which they got through very creditably, particularly when you take into consideration the little practice in the handling of arms which they have on board a ship such as this. Notice, however, that they all gave the old "Present," which would point to the conclusion that they have never been drilled on land since the new one came out.

At 9.25 we sighted the first and smallest of the "Twelve Apostles," and by eleven we had steamed by the last. There is nothing remarkable about these rocks, except the remarkably straight line in which they are grouped together in the sea. Here is a catalogue of forthcoming islands:—Zebayer Island to Jebel Zuker, about seventy miles; J. Z. to Perim, ninety-five miles. After passing Zuker we come to an island called "Little Hamesh," and then sight a small group rejoicing in the title of the "Mahabrackhabs," having passed by which, sailing down the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, we reach the island of Perim.

About two o'clock to-day, the quarter-deck underwent a complete transformation, by way of preparation for the sports, which shortly afterwards commenced. Just picture to yourself this *sanctum sanctorum* of one of Her Majesty's ships completely blocked up by the presence, in close proximity, of several large canvas baths, denying all passage by ordinary mode of progression to the gangways, while across the centre of the small open space, still left on the deck, lies suspended a great pole in mid-air, lengthways, reaching from side to side, with at least half-a-dozen ropes extending from pole to ground.

The bugle sounds the "Fall in," with one G to denote the first Event, and suddenly, helter-skelter down the ladder-stairs, from the poop above, come rushing a motley crowd of partially dressed soldiers and sailors, who start the obstacle race by climbing hand over hand up the ropes on one side, round the pole to which they loosely hang, and down again the other side. Off then they scamper at break-neck speed, by the gangway to their right, all round the ship, appearing on the quarter-deck again by the gangway to the left. Before being able to issue from this, however, according to the rules of the race, they had to pass, on all fours, through quite a serious obstacle. Two barrels hung over the centre of the sail baths, into which latter all competitors had to flop before being able to get to these barrels, which they had to wriggle through in snake-like fashion. This particular

race was several times repeated, one mirth-provoking feature of each event being the performance of a man clad in a rather shabby-genteel dress suit, and wearing a tall hat—anything but *fin de siècle*—who had his face blackened in nigger-minstrel fashion. He always came in a good last, though he puffed and perspired more than all the others put together, and each time that he climbed the rope he left a rag or two of his garments behind, while some blacking poured off his face at each waddle through the water. If this kind of thing had lasted much longer, he would doubtless, in his zeal for sport, have ended in emulating, in its simplicity, the peculiar garb affected by our first parents in Eden, the fig-leaf even being minus in this case. Luckily, however, we were spared this undesirable consummation, not through any diminution of energy on the part of the sailor, but through the timely finish of the race.

There was also a race of this kind for the officers, in which several of the subs. took part, going through each feature of the events in precisely the same manner as the men, and displaying, as far as I could see, quite as much agility.

Another *pièce de resistance* of the day's performance was the Grand Tournament, in which one man, mounted on the shoulders of another, rode his human horse under an overhanging bucket, tilting at this, *en passant*, with mop in lieu of spear. The grand feature of this competition was that the bucket could not very well be speared without

being overturned, and its contents emptied on top of knight and charger, who rode out of the arena completely drenched. Quite as sensible this, after all, as the chivalrous sports of Spain, laughed away for ever by Don Quixote!

From this it may be seen that, on board a troopship, life is not quite so dull as one might think, and here, where our fighting men of both services are thrown together in rude health, the Saxon love of manly sports triumphs over tropical heat and the not, for such performances, altogether favourable conditions which exist at sea. I have here simply touched on the comic side of these performances. There are also occasionally, for those who like this kind of thing, boxing competitions and other exhibitions, in which real steady skill as opposed to amusing horse-play may be witnessed.

Wednesday, 31st December 1890.

Immediately after getting up this morning, about 6.30, made straight for the upper deck, and found land, as expected, on the port-side. This was evidently no rock in the middle of the sea, but a glimpse of the Arabian coast-line. It appears, we have already passed by Perim, and issued from the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. Had I not yielded last night to constitutional laziness, certainly not less than normal in the Tropics, I should have allowed my rest to be disturbed by Harris at 3.30 this morning, and seen something in the dark, laid down in books of Geography as the Straits



of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Island of Perim. Of this latter place, accordingly, I know absolutely nothing to the point. I remember, however, reading, some time ago in some magazine, something with reference to a Governor of this island. Here is the story, as far as I can call it to mind:

Some nonentity, that the Government of the day wished, for some reason or another, to be civil to, was pitchforked into the post. At regularly recurring intervals his Excellency's official reports arrived in London. The island and the people were prospering in a remarkable degree, and the new Governor seemed to be doing wonders. The time came at last for him to get the usual leave, and he hastened to avail himself of it. Arrived in London, he duly reported at the Colonial Office, and, thanks to his quickly gained reputation for general efficiency, was well received by the minister. It was time, thought the latter, to show his appreciation of the services so well and quickly rendered, by removing this official to some more pleasing post than that of the deputy-sovereignty of this wretched, unhealthy, out-of-the-way Red Sea rock. To the surprise of everybody, the man, while thanking Government for its kindness, requested to be sent back to his lone abode, to which, he declared, he had become attached, and where he had got, if God prospered him, good work yet to do. His request was granted. Some months after the expiration of his leave, just after

the usual flowery report had been received from Perim, it leaked out that his Excellency had been met by some one walking in Piccadilly. Soon all was apparent. The Governor was a fraud, and a gigantic one. He had ruled the island by deputy ever since his appointment to the little coveted post. It was he, of course, who drew the salary, while some over-educated Oriental attached to the local post-office, for a consideration, furnished all the reports, in a manner in which his Excellency, who had the sense to acknowledge to himself that his intellect did not precisely suit him for this work, could never have accomplished. I do not think the magazine-writer clearly explained what had become of the Governor. For all I know, he is still snugly located in London, governing Perim, like a sensible man, at a healthy distance. Better fifty years of Piccadilly than a cycle of Perim!

Of the story, as told, *si non è vero è ben trovato*.¹

It was about twelve o'clock that the first shout of "Aden" was raised. Right enough, there was a long, bold front of rock unusually steep, and displaying features very clearly defined, sufficiently well answering to my preconceived ideas of this "white man's grave" in the Red Sea. Very

¹ Since writing the above, I have read the same story, but this time told of an Infantry subaltern, in an interesting and well-known little volume of verses, entitled *Lays of Ind*, the author of which is I believe, a cavalry officer.

different in appearance from Gibraltar is this Asiatic "Gib." First, a dreary line of rocks, quite as tiresome to the view as the "Twelve Apostles," and then *the* Rock, which differs from the others in that it rises gradually to a greater height from a point jutting out into the sea. This extremity is, I believe, known by the name of "Steamers' Point."

Just above this place one could distinguish a group of white, square objects, undoubtedly houses of some kind or other. It is in this place, I believe, that the barracks are located. This Aden shares with Sierra Leone the unenviable reputation of being the worst station possible from a health, and, I suppose, from every other point of view, for European troops. In this White Man's Grave, one out of every three regiments homeward-bound from India has to stay one year in garrison. At present it is the First Battalion of the Connaught Rangers who are unfortunate enough to have dropped in for the "rob," as Private Atkins would express it.¹ By the way, I should like to know what are the already formed convictions on the part of this gentleman as to the Foreign Possessions of Great Britain and Ireland. I believe he is rapidly coming to the conclusion that all these "furrin' parts" bear a striking resemblance to each

¹ Quite recently I met a friend belonging to the Army Medical Department, who was stationed for some time at Aden. According to him, though the heat is very great, the station is not nearly so bad as commonly represented. Temporary escape from the rock into the Somali country, where there is plenty of big shooting, is always possible for the officers of the garrison.

other, and that, while England herself is the only place in the world which is not a mere barren, stony *fiature in the ocean*, she herself, outside herself, gives strong manifestation of a rooted mania for rocks. As the Celtic peasant, with his inborn craving after the soil, develops into the "land-grabber," so Britain, in her desire to plant her flag in as many holes and corners of this round globe of ours as possible, has always displayed a tendency to rock-grabbing. It is well to consider, however, that most of these rocks have their uses, and are singularly well-pitched in the seas for purposes of protection and defence of the great empire, of which they each form a unit, in a long chain of outlying sentries. None the less for this, our private's views on the subject of foreign parts must be strange. First of all he saw "Gib," then he soldiered nearly a year in Malta, where his eyes rested on no green fields, and where his feet daily assured him that he was really on a rock. Since then, on rocks he has feasted his eyes. "Roll on, India!" he cried, towards the end of his stay in Malta, in his longing for a place with greater room to move about in. He will get what he wants soon enough, and then will *roll on* some other place.

The band played, as usual on the poop, for the officers,—the drums having discoursed sweet music in the forenoon, on the forecastle, for the special delectation of the men.

Much merrymaking on the part of the junior

officers in the doorless smoking-room on the quarter-deck, after the nightly dance had ended. As the gong struck twelve, the jovial "subs," standing, sang "God save the Queen"—by way of speeding, I suppose, the parting year and welcoming the coming—with demonstrations of renewed loyalty to the reigning House.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INDIAN OCEAN.

Thursday, 1st January 1891.

SPENT the last night of the year, now passed, under circumstances not altogether conducive to feelings of hope and pleasure. Stretched myself on deck, on the now deserted poop, near the wheel-room, and, my mind becoming weary of reviewing the events of the twelve months gone, invoked the slumber gradually brought about by the monotonous and somewhat mournful music of the waves beating steadily against the ship's stern. Before long, I was dreaming of burglars, with dark lanterns, trying to effect an entrance into the Troopship—standing on the top of huge waves, with false keys and “jimmies” in their hands. It was just occurring to me that it behoved me to be up and doing—something exceptionally heroic. I rose,—there, sure enough, was a very tall man, with a lantern in his hand, looking down upon me. He was dressed in the uniform of a naval warrant officer, and he wanted me particularly to give him some information about the Military Ash Party, in whom he was

in some way interested. I looked blankly at him, and felt much disappointed. I had no chance of earning the Victoria Cross, after all, and yet my fitful slumbers had been rudely broken in upon. It was hard. I had just begun to doze again, and was once one more dreaming of burglars. Why is it that civilised people, from childhood upwards, have invariably a predilection for such subjects in their dreams? This time the burglars had the best of me. Everything was going against me. Within the last half hour I had been promoted *full* sergeant, and the Colonel was just marking his crowning approval to my efforts of the past three years with a "J" pen, on a paper which strongly recommended me for my commission. A particularly daring burglar—a cross in breed between an Arab and a Welshman, with the cunning of both peoples compounded—had distracted the Colonel's attention at the critical moment, by asking him, cap in hand, how many knots an hour we were just then going. My commanding officer, muttering something about *noblesse oblige*-ing, bowed to the burglar, and promptly descended the ladder leading from the poop to the quarter-deck, to ascertain her exact speed and bearings from the saloon steward. I could hear both of them talking in loud tones, and the saloon steward was waxing angry, and getting vulgar in his speech. He was insisting that for two hours past we had been registering the phenomenal speed of fifty-nine and a half knots an hour, and that before morning

we should safely issue from the Gulf of Finland. The Colonel was doubting it all aloud, and, as a British citizen, albeit a soldier, I thought he had a perfect right to doubt. At the same time, I regretted that he had been led into the argument, and thought the whole proceeding rather *infra dig.* on his part.

"Pardon me, sir," I began, "but if I were in your place, I am inclined to think that I should almost—" Before I had time to finish my sentence, however, one of Pickford's furniture vans came noiselessly up the gangway, and a figure in white slipped nimbly out at the back and appeared suddenly in front of the disputing pair. At first—still dreaming, of course—I thought it was the ghost of Hamlet, but it afterwards turned out to be the saloon cook, who happened ~~to~~ be wearing his distinctive head-dress, as also his apron.

"Excuse me," said the Colonel; "let this gentleman decide for us."

I trembled. "*Actum est de exercitu!*" I exclaimed, "it is all up with the army," quoting from Thomas Kerchever Arnold's Latin Prose Composition, Part II. I could not help thinking that one poor Colonel would stand a small chance against two such important naval authorities as the saloon steward and the saloon cook. I felt very much inclined to force the *dénouement*, by administering a sound drubbing to the two petty officers with a piece of hard rope which I had by me.

Luckily, however, the saloon steward waxed

wrath than ever at the idea of having his authority disputed in this way by a land-lubber.

"What!" he exclaimed, stamping both feet on the ground alternately—*marking time*, in fact—"What! have it decided by such a thing as that!" with any amount of emphasis on the *thing*.

I looked at the cook, and thought this contemptuous allusion to him hardly appropriate, inasmuch as he struck me as being extremely imposing in person, weighing, perhaps, all told, seventeen or eighteen stone. If he was angry, he did not discover it; his features were still placid and regular, and as destitute of expression as one of his best-rounded pancakes.

The Colonel, in a delightfully *nonchalant* way, showing himself, under the most disadvantageous circumstances, as every inch an officer and a gentleman, had quietly explained to the cook that he desired to get at the truth in this matter, for he had volunteered to gather the information for a gentleman—alluding to the burglar, I suppose,—who was then waiting anxiously on the poop.

To my intense relief, the cook decided in favour of my commanding officer. I jumped with joy—still in my sleep, of course. The steward was furious.

"Do not let us lose our tempers over it," said the Colonel, this time rather excitedly, in a commanding-officer's-parade tone of voice. "Life is far too short for that."

"It's you that's getting your 'rag' out now,"

said the steward, more intensely vulgar than ever.

"I shall get my Whittaker out," said the Colonel, "and that perhaps will satisfy you." On this, he strode off triumphantly with his hands in his pockets, whistling the regimental march-past, to his cabin in search of the almanack.

In the meantime, my attention was directed to the movements of the burglar on the poop. He was peering about in a most disquieting manner, dilating his nostrils. "Evidently on the rampage," I thought. I thought right. Soon he simmered down quietly about three yards in front of me, and began to examine the legs of the deck-chair just vacated by my commanding officer. Great Scott! there, for security, rolled round the leg, the paper which the Colonel had been drawing up on my behalf had been left. In an instant the document was in the hands of the burglar. Crying out that he would demand a heavy ransom for it, the bold robber made a hop, step and jump towards the stern of the ship, and disappeared in the direction of Aden, crying, "Eureka! I have found it!"

"What good does it do you?" I cried after him. "I think it is very selfish of you; and where on earth did you learn your Greek?"

"Greek be jiggered!"

"Hallo! who are you?" said I to the newcomer.

"The Bogey Man," was the reply.

This proved really too much for me.

"Where's that Bogey Man," I exclaimed, rising to my sea-legs.

"Hush!" he whispered, holding up his hands.

"Bosh!" I suggested.

"No, no; it is—straight—I tell you."

"What's straight, and what did you tell me?"

"Why, sergeant, I b'lieve yer dreaming after all.¹ If I didn't know yer character, and know that it's impossible, or next door to it, to get anything wot was stronger nor lime-juice in this 'ere show, blow me if I wouldn't think ye'd been out on the tiles all night."

"Out on the tiles! On the ropes you mean; I have had a coil of ropes for a pillow just now and the bare deck for a mattress!"

"Oh, I've knowed as ye weren't accustomed to this 'ere lot, an' its that as brings me here, like."

It was more bewildering than ever. I rubbed my eyes to satisfy myself and ascertained, beyond a doubt, that I was now awake. The next thing

¹ To those who love horse-flesh in all forms, and who desire a really good thing in night-mares, I strongly recommend a sudden migration to the water-swept wastes between Aden and Bombay. If possible, you should find yourself crossing the country on the back of a Trooper, with the temperature something abnormal in the shade. Let it be the last night of the year—any year you like. Let it vividly dawn upon you that your late Past has been somewhat disappointing, and that your Future, just then, leaves ample room for doubt. As you lie in a recumbent position, every molecule of your personal matter, from the back of the head to the sole of the feet, will remind you that your Present is, at any rate, uncomfortable. You will soon see the animal, and you will spur the beast on with tropical ardour.

was to prove that my very existence was not a dream. "*Cogito ergo sum*—I think, therefore I am"—I mentally exclaimed with the philosopher, who, like every other foolish person who tried it, was in the end unable to prove his own existence. "I am, it is only too true that I am," I exclaimed rushing after the marine. "What's the matter now, I wonder; something serious, it must be." ¹ Was not this really too annoying. I had carefully inspected the whole Watch, and actually seen each party under its corporal, complete and present stretched in its usual and ordered place for the night. Instead of then going quietly off to my hammock below, I had actually lain down on deck myself, within sight and hail of them, and yet it would seem that everything was going wrong. I could get no definite information from the marine.

"Wanted partikler" was all that he would deign to say. At last he stopped at the far end of the gangway, forehead, by the box where the squeegees, mops and other instruments of torture to those endeavouring to solve that difficult problem on

*
¹ I had taken command of the Third Watch, formed from the cavalry draft. The military watch on board must be distinguished from the guard. The watch is merely a working party with several sub-divisions, each directly under command of a corporal—ash party, reelers, handsteerers, etc. The sergeant of the watch parades the watch when it mounts for duty, collects the reports, and warns the necessary men for each party. With the work of each party, after he has told them off, he has nothing further to do. As they act under the corporal detailed, who is directly controlled by a naval warrant or petty officer, on the spot. I had been corporal in charge of the Reelers on the trip out to Malta.

board ship, to sit quietly in a given place for the space of one half hour without running the danger of being suddenly mopped up or washed overboard, independently of any eccentric doings of the breakers.

The marine dived both hands into the box and brought out something between them.

"What's that" I queried, beginning to doubt the man's sanity.

"Whisky, sergeant; whisky, only whisky."

I could not speak. I was wild and wondering—wondering what the man would next say or do, wild at my odd dream being rudely broken in upon.

"Look 'ere, sergeant. 'Scuse me. I'm a rough-and-ready kind o' bloke, and I'se never had no scoolin' much to speak about. They didn't eddicate me, they only dragged me up, but that doesn't prevent me recognizin' them as is different in every way. Look here, I felt that there sorry for yer lyin' on them there 'ard boards which there wasn't, if it comes to that, no necessity for you to do, partikler when I saw that there warrant bloke wakin' yer up to ax a question which he never wanted to know, just for the sake of axin it and hearin his own voice, that I said to myself as 'ow I'd ask yer to come and 'ave a drop of this 'ere black bottle to cheer yer like, on this 'ere New Year's morn."

I would not have sacrificed five minutes needed sleep for all the whisky that was ever distilled, but, none the less, I could not help being really touched at the well-meant offer of this friendly marine, so

with much show of gratitude, I put the bottle to my mouth.

"Where on earth did you get it?"

"Look 'ere, sergeant, 'scuse me for saying so, but if you ax me no questions I'll tell ye no lies."

It was not right to look a gift horse in the mouth. Later on, I discovered, however, that the black bottle, which was only half filled, had been honestly acquired by the marine, and was in fact a Christmas or rather New Year's gift to him, on the part of one entitled to make a present of the kind.

Morning was now breaking over the surface of the ocean. I made up my mind not to attempt to resume my night-mare. Sufficient for the night is the evil thereof—in the tropics—and the night had now given place to day. Had a long and interesting chat with the benevolent marine, who is acting as ship's corporal, for the nonce. Were he again to enlist, he would enlist into the Line. A marine, it seems, is a *filius nullius*, subject to military discipline on land, to naval discipline afloat. He wears the uniform of the ordinary line soldier and yet he points us out as *soldiers*, and speaks of our barracks on land as *soldiers' barracks*. He belongs to the navy himself, and yet he is not a sailor. On land at Portsmouth, Plymouth and elsewhere, he does the ordinary duty of a soldier in the garrison, and he fights in the field as a soldier with soldiers. His officers are eligible for many purely military appointments ashore, can become adjutants

of volunteer regiments in the most inland counties, and are even eligible for permanent appointments in the Army Service Corps and the Indian Staff Corps, and yet the marine private does not call himself a soldier, though he generally acknowledges that were he beginning life again he would enlist as one. Yet he is not wanting in *esprit de corps* and is proud of the motto *per mare et terras*. Long ago when my regiment was first raised, we did service for some time on battle-ships as marines, but then we still belonged entirely to the army. As a matter of fact, to all intents and purposes, the marine is a soldier now in spite of his official connection with the Admiralty. The soldier's uniform which he wears, clearly shows what he is designed for—a soldier liable for long periods of service at sea. I wonder what is the precise idea of having a corps of soldiers for duty on board ship; surely the overawing of mutinous sailors, did such ever become necessary, is not the reason for the present constitution of the corps! The *Infanterie de la Marine*, to be seen at Brest and other seaport towns in France, are soldiers pure and simple, and eligible as such for service in Tonquin and all French Colonies. I do not think they ever actually serve afloat. One day in Valetta, I happened to render some little service to a Vaguemestre, or sailor-postman, of one of the principal ships of the French Fleet, then lying in the harbour. He was purchasing stamps for his letters, and wanted a certain number of Malta-island stamps, in addition

to stamps for France and other places, and not speaking English, found it almost impossible to get the people in the shop to understand him. After I had managed to help him out of his difficulty and pointed out the Post-office to him, he volunteered to show me over his ship, the *Amiral Baudin*. Next day, accordingly, I went on board and saw everything to be seen. I noticed particularly that they had no men attired as soldiers on board. Their sentries and policeman were dressed as ordinary sailors, though, as far as I could ascertain, they really corresponded to our marines, not being available for ordinary sailor's duty and specially enlisted. They are called *cannoniers*; the French for *petty officer* on the other hand, is *officier marinier*.

The United States' Marines have a distinct and semi-military uniform—if a blue suit, somewhat too closely resembling the every-day working dress of an English butcher, can be awarded this title. In spite, then, of his military outfit, training and general appearance, the private of the smart corps, which is justly proud of its honours by land and sea in our Service, calls himself, not a soldier, but a marine, pure and simple. To the sailors he is known as "Joey, the marine." His colour-sergeant is jocularly designated as "Stripey." Almost every man in the ship has a nickname of some kind or other. The master-at-arms is "Jaunty;" the carpenter, "Chippie;" the ship's corporals, "Crushers;" the saloon attendants, "Flunkies;" the cooper, "Jimmy Bungs;"

the butcher, "Ducks;" blacksmith, "Blackie;" plumber, "Tinny;" cook, "Slushy;" stoker, "Clinker." The blue-jackets themselves answer to the name of "Flat-foots," or the French *Mate-lots*; while the captain of the ship is irreverently referred to as the "Skipper," and the senior lieutenant is universally known as "Number One." As in the army, certain surnames have recognised *aliases*. All the Campbells are "Jocks," and the Murphys, "Spuds." In the dim and distant past, though not recorded in the *Domesday Book*, an individual of the name of Walker was playfully dubbed "Hookey." Since then, every Walker in the army and navy (their name is legion) off duty, is known as "Hookey Walker!" To call a Clarke by the name entered against him in his parish register, would be to display lamentable ignorance of men and manners, and to run the risk of being voted stuck-up and priggish. Every Clarke that walks this earth, in red or blue, answers to the name of "Nobby." It is his proud birthright, and he claims the title.

Here is the great difference, which will first strike the superficial observer, between the educated and the uneducated — between the *esprit officier* and the *esprit simple soldat* — if I may so express it. The latter is *direct* in thought and speech. The other is more or less ornate, according to the culture of the man in question, and above all, his individual nature, but is always indirect and explanatory. Private Thomas Atkins is introduced

to somebody. Within space of half an hour that man is an old friend of his, whom it is quite proper to address by Christian name or surname, failing an affectionate nickname, to whom Thomas can quite confide all things. In fact, he becomes suddenly oblivious to the fact that the other man has not known him, and everybody whom he happens to know, all his life.

"When I was up in the Smoke, me and old Nobby went to see 'The Wild West,' and what do you think old Nobby did? Why, he bet Jim Smith half a gallon to a pint that he wouldn't tell him what height Buffalo Bill was to an inch, but that he'd tell himself; and so he did, too, and won the bet."

It has never once occurred to the speaker that his new friend and everybody else does not know this particular "Old Nobby" well; and, as regards Jim Smith, who he is, how he came to be in their company, and to what extent he enters into the private life of both of them, he thinks it quite unnecessary to explain. It is unnecessary. The educated man would say, in a casual manner, that when last in town he went with a friend—no name or particulars—to the Wild West Show, and that his friend made a bet with another fellow whom they met in the grounds, etc., etc., etc. He is very *indirect*, but sufficiently explanatory. If he mentioned names, he would find it necessary to further explain—that he went with a man named Clarke, belong-

ing to the Rifles. He might know Clarke, of the Rifles, for years, and never attempt to pass a *direct* remark on said Clarke's personal appearance; whereas, Mr Atkins, in all affection over a pot of beer, would, within an hour after making his acquaintance, tell Mr Clarke that if he wanted anybody to believe that he, Clarke, was, only twenty-five, he had better advertise for an amiable marine, for that, as far as he himself was concerned, he felt sure that that old "chivvie" of Clarke's, alluding to his new friend's face, had seen far more days than dinners! Then Mr Clarke, to show that he took no offence, would lay his hand on his friend's shoulder, and say something even more direct and to the point about him.

Let some amusing incident happen one morning in barracks. One soldier in the barrack-room happens to refer to it after parade; the other men in the room say little, but laugh and enjoy the joke and then forget all about it. In the ante-room, an officer speaks about it, and everybody else has *something* indirectly to say; and one points out to another some particularly ludicrous thing in connection with the matter, which otherwise might escape notice. The laugh is much longer. Probably the subject crops up again at mess in the evening, and somebody else becomes *explanatory*, and shows how the humour of the thing is not quite exhausted yet. What an ordinary liberal education really does for us

is not so much, perhaps, to add directly and materially to our use in life, as to train us to analyse our thoughts unconsciously to ourselves, perhaps, and to look not only directly at things, but indirectly at them also, and see them in their side-lights. The educated man, if of fairly sound mind and not suffering from indigestion, ought to have his happiness in life increased, but is always liable to be upset by trifles, which do not affect the uneducated man, looking only at troubles directly before him and completely ignoring their side-aspects.

I have often thought what a great educational machine a standing army could be. In fact, at the present moment it is one—taking the word *education* in its more literal, as also in its more general meaning. Amongst the advantages of the army—placarded on the walls of the local Post Offices all over the kingdom—I do not think any mention is made of the fact that a man can be taught, in the army, all that could ever be required of him or useful to him, in the station of life, to which the bulk of recruits belong. Yet I have heard soldiers acknowledge that they have to thank the army for all the education they have ever had. I know of one striking case in particular. A man, at the time of his enlistment, could barely write out his own name, by way of signature to his monthly statement of accounts in the pocket-ledger, commonly known as “small book,” with

which each soldier is provided. Five years afterwards, thanks to persevering good conduct and hard work, that man had risen to the rank of colour-sergeant. His handwriting then would fit him for the position of clerk in any business establishment, and he had become an accomplished accountant. It must be understood that the colour-sergeant of a company, after the captain, really commands the company. As a rule, he is a man who not only thoroughly understands his drill and military duties, but is also able, unaided, to perform all the clerical work of the company. It is he who daily prepares all the Forms and Requisitions, which are laid before the captain in the evening, for that officer's inspection and signature, prior to being sent into the Regimental Orderly Room on the following day. The colour-sergeant also acts as pay-sergeant of the company—getting a list from the Quartermaster's department and elsewhere, of all the charges against each individual man of the company, and balancing them in the pay-sheet against such pay as each man is entitled to. In addition to this, it is he who, on the representation of other non-commissioned officers, has the actual drawing up and wording of indictments, known in the army as "crimes," against the military offenders of the company. In many cases, by judicious and timely action on his part, without any recourse to higher authority, serious trouble is avoided. This necessitates the possession of some tact

on his part ; and a colour-sergeant who is not gifted with some tact is totally unfitted for his position.

It occasionally happens that a man who has not had the advantage of the most elementary education, after enlisting, attends the regimental school, and getting, one by one, the necessary certificates, passes through the different grades of non-commissioned rank to a commission as quarter-master. All the quarter-masters of the army have been private soldiers in their time, and I should say the majority of them have the army, and the stimulus to learning by the desire to rise in the army, to thank for whatever they have learned.

Before a man can be promoted corporal, it is necessary for him to have passed a school-examination, entitling him to a military third-class certificate of education, in reading, writing, and the elementary rules of arithmetic. A second-class certificate, embracing a more extensive knowledge of arithmetic and the faculty of making out a pay and messing sheet, and balancing a saving bank's account, from given data, is necessary before the rank of sergeant can be attained. A first-class certificate, with a much wider range of subjects, has always been a *sine quâ non* before recommendation for a combatant commission, but of late it has been made necessary, for promotion to quarter-master, sergeant-major,¹ and many minor

¹ As for the regimental sergeant-major, he has to constitute himself a walking encyclopædia of military lore. After the Colonel and Adjutant, he possesses more power for good or evil than any other one man in the regiment.

staff appointments, within the range of the ordinary non-commissioned officer. To prepare any man who wishes to present himself, in time, for such examination, step by step, there is open all day a regimental school, with a schoolmaster and assistants provided by the military authorities. But it is not in the opportunities afforded by the regimental school that I should recognise the fact that the army was a great educating machine, actual, and to a still greater extent, potential. School attendance is not now compulsory, and men without ambition, including the majority of soldiers, cannot be expected to attend. On every private soldier, however, his daily military routine of duties, in which he is taught not only to obey but to act and think, to a great extent for himself, must have a great civilising and educating tendency. His very drill, embracing as it does problems of time and space and distance, to be worked out practically with the greatest exactitude, with its accompanying postulates, axioms, and theorems, is, I think, an excellent every-day substitute, from a mind-developing point of view, for the first six books of Euclid, drearily waded through by the boys of our leading public schools.

As for the non-commissioned officers, the "backbone of the army," as they have not been improperly styled, the amount of professional learning which they have to acquire and *do* in the course of their services acquire, would hardly be credited by the ordinary civilian in this nation of shopkeepers.

I happen to have been at a school, where it was customary to be given, as a punishment, for some minor offence, the task of learning by rote a certain specified number of lines of Virgil, Homer, or some English poet, as the nature of the case required. The boys who had these tasks to perform belonged to the "classes," and their only business in life, for the time being, was to learn more or less thoroughly a certain minimum of more or less useful subjects in a certain number of years. When I enlisted into the ranks, I was simply astonished at seeing men of the *masses*, clad in red coats, committing to memory, *word for word*, page after page, of instructions for other men, whose military efficiency they were in some degree responsible for. This they did, not by way of punishment, but as a duty which did not in any way exempt them from the performance of other ordinary duties of the day. This matter learned verbatim is commonly known as *detail*. The Detail of the various movements in the Manual, Firing, and Bayonet Exercises, in connection with the rifle alone, has to be acquired by every non-commissioned officer, and he has to refresh his memory from time to time, and to keep himself well posted with the frequent minor changes in the instructions, which are made by the authorities.

This is merely a certain definite instance of the use to which a non-commissioned officer has to put his head, in private, as opposed to his arms and legs, which every civilian who looks through a barrack-gate can see daily at exercise. This parrot-

like acquirement is necessary, but it may be directly of no very great educational use. The mind of the non-commissioned officer is not, however, allowed to run stagnant when this point has been arrived at.

By an order which came out within the past three years, a certain professional examination is made necessary for promotion to each rank, independently altogether of the ordinary school certificate also required. Preparation for these examinations, if made in thoroughness, is really an education in itself, requiring, as it does, not only a definite knowledge of rules and observances, but also the intelligent understanding of the *raison d'être* for such, in connection with movements and dispositions of bodies of men, preparing for, possibly, mortal conflict in the field, in addition to knowledge of the ordinary peace routine of the soldier's duties and specified portions of military law. Over and above all this, at certain periods of the year, special classes for non-commissioned officers are held at different centres throughout the kingdom, or rather throughout the empire.

Every regiment sends one or more representatives to acquire a more thorough and profound knowledge of certain professional subjects. Hythe is the great musketry academy, "established for the special musketry training of officers, warrant-officers, colour-sergeants, and sergeants, in order that they may thoroughly qualify themselves to instruct recruits, and to train their troops and companies; and also that a uniform system of instruc-

tion may prevail throughout the army." Here is taught, in full, not only the practical use of the rifle, but its mechanical structure, and the various causes which determine its efficacy, or the reverse; in the hands of the men who are destined to defend the Empire with it.

At Chatham classes of non-commissioned officers, delegated from the different regiments stationed in the three Kingdoms, are instructed in elementary field engineering, in the erection of stockades, construction of shelter-trenches, making of roads, throwing up of bridges, defence of houses and farms attacked by an enemy, general field geometry, etc.

In every garrison, frequent classes are held, throughout the year, for instruction in elementary road-surveying and map-making, generally known as Reconnaissance Classes. What civilian is there living, within a radius of ten miles of a garrison town, who has not seen a small party of red-coats pacing the roads with pencil, paper, protractor, and compass in hand?

I say little here of the signalling classes, for the men who attend them, as a rule, devote themselves exclusively to the practice of the knowledge which they have acquired, and do not, as in the other cases mentioned, perform the ordinary duties of non-commissioned officers on their return to their regiments. They have acquired the faculty of communicating the thoughts and orders of men over miles of country, by a skilful arrangement of waving flags, by making the sun subservient to military

exigencies by day, and by artificial lights by night. To retain their acquired skill and quickness in this important practice, they devote themselves all but exclusively to their own special duties, though occasional drills and the ordinary annual practice with the rifle remind them that they are still fighting men. Writing, drawing, shorthand, telegraphy, military signalling—they are all modes of expressing thought and speech in this complex civilisation of ours, and the son of a rustic labourer, who enlists into the army, and learns his duty as a fighting man, may afterwards be instructed, at the State's expense, in five out of the six named subjects. This is what the army, at the present moment, without any improving or reforming, does for men desirous of advancing in its ranks. That it does educate, as it is, and develop all the best faculties of a man, physical and mental, there can be no doubt whatever. During the three years past that I have served as a soldier, I have noticed this quickening influence in men around me. At each stage of progress, almost, some change is apparent—a change brought about by the training already undergone, and by the sense of self-reliance and increased responsibility growing in the individual. From private to lance-corporal, corporal to sergeant, each man, as he rises, almost invariably gives signs of progress in the sense to which I particularly allude, and which is of main interest to the outside public. What a contrast there is, in tone, between the sergeants' mess and the barrack-room! One would imagine that the ser-

geants had sprung altogether from a different class in life to the private, and this, in the main, is not so. If not, then, their high military training *plus* the attendance at school necessary for promotion, is the cause of the change, and the army, then, undoubtedly is, at the present moment, a highly wrought educating machine. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

In the sergeants' mess we meet with an exceptionally well-conducted body of men, on the whole polite and courteous to one another, altogether intelligent, taking an interest in the general events of the day, and always ready to discuss points of professional interest. This, perhaps, is in the nature of news to the casual civilian, little interested in matters military.

Now for the *potential* influence of the army in this peculiar direction. At some day, perhaps not far distant, it may be found necessary by the State to ordain that every man born within the Empire shall be trained, in part, at least to defend it, as far as one man can do so. Conscription is opposed to the idea of individual freedom entertained by the vast majority of Englishmen; nevertheless, though, I suppose, it is possible that some day or another conscription may be resorted to and every male, within certain limits, of age be required to serve for a stated period in the army. In that case, the army would become a great school for the whole nation, forming to some extent the minds and manners of men enlisted into it at an age, when mind and manners have not yet been altogether formed. In the meantime, however, it is to be presumed that

the general standard of elementary education all over the country would have improved, as it has been improving for years past, and that the recruits who enlisted would, before enlisting, have already mostly acquired a fairly good elementary education. The effect which a short term of military discipline would have on them would be, then, in another direction. The collective opinions of a whole people, on most subjects of life, is, I suppose, in the main just and true. A whole people would be represented in the ranks of our army. It would follow, I should say, that the *tone* of that army, recruited now mainly from one section of the populace, would be improved. The men, who wanted most this particular educating, this *bringing forth* and developing of their best qualities, could not fail to be influenced by the others. This may be Utopian and, very probably, conscription will never be necessary. I merely want to show, as far as I can, what seems to me correct, that there are two ways of looking on the *standing army* question.

The good old-fashioned way of looking at the soldiery, as necessarily more "brutal and licentious" than any other class of men, and a standing army as necessarily a standing scourge, has not yet perhaps been altogether abandoned by honest but stupid members of the great middle class in these islands. Witness those tiresome and altogether beside-the-point discussions, which appear in the newspapers from time to time as to the treatment outside their barracks of soldiers in uniform, by

civil members of the community, who, probably as it is, if everything is taken into account, are on the whole not only not better educated but actually not better off, in a pecuniary sense, than the dubious red-coats. As it is, some day or another, the State may see its way towards establishing something in the nature of a Second-class Staff College for non-commissioned officers. If a certain percentage of junior non-coms., corporals, were sent there from time to time for the purposes of general professional, as opposed to special instruction, and if it were pointed out to them, while there, how necessary it was for the improvement and better contentment of the private soldier in the barrack-rooms amongst themselves, as also for bringing about a higher opinion of them outside, that they should make strenuous efforts to put a stop to the use of that habitually objectionable language, which is now their *one great weak point*,¹ what wonders could be accomplished in this particular groove of education. The mere fact of hearing such principles inculcated occasionally at centres, where corporals from all regiments were assembled, on their best behaviour, for the credit of their corps, would cause these non-commissioned officers, living in the barrack-rooms, on their return to their ordinary duties, to bring about, if only for the sake of showing their *smartness*, a better state of things in this way. It must

¹ A weak point which, *beyond a doubt*, exercises a very directly unfavourable influence on recruiting among the decent and *bona fide* working class outside, and eventually tends to cause a low, *undisciplined and unsoldierly* tone, inside.

be remembered that the power of the junior lance-corporal, when acting in the discharge of his duty, backed up as it is by the authority of the State, exceeds beyond calculating the power of any schoolmaster, and that men, under military discipline, accustomed as well as obliged to obey, are much more likely to gradually dispose their minds in the required direction than any schoolboys, though the latter may be ever so willing. I have myself seen this proved beyond doubting. More than once of late, in the Service papers, it has been proposed to adopt a system by which soldiers, so desirous, while actually serving with the Colours, could be given facilities for learning a trade, which would prove useful to them when they returned to civil life. Looking at the fact that, on an average, during five days out of the seven, in an ordinary garrison town in England, the private's working day finishes at three o'clock in the afternoon, there is no doubt that he could have ample time, if that was all that he needed, to become expert at any skilled craft which he fancied. In India he has practically the whole day to himself—no parade taking place, in the vast majority of stations, after breakfast-time. If their lives within it be so easy, then, and the army offers such great advantages to working lads, how is it, it may be objected by outsiders, that it would seem that such a large number of men yearly embrace the first opportunity of quitting the service and returning to hard manual labour as civilians. I think it is quite true to state that one of the very advantages

which the army offers, is one of the principal causes of this. When the Drums, beating the Retreat of an evening announce to all the men within the barrack gates that the military day has come to a close, any one who happened to be standing by one of the groups of soldiers, who, with folded arms, stand on the Square, listening to their own musicians, would be almost certain to hear at least one man of the throng, at that particular time, volunteer the information, "there goes another 2d. in the bank for me." This is the soldiers' Reserve Fund, commonly known as his Deferred Pay, to be drawn by him when he has finished his period of service with the Colours. Under the regulation, which obtains at present, every linesman enlists for twelve years—seven with the Colours and five in the Reserve. If of sufficiently good character and physically fit, he can serve out the whole period of twelve years with the Colours, after which the State has no further claim on him. Now, when a man has served his first period of seven years, he knows that he has only got to elect to leave the service, to get a nice little present of £21, and he further knows that for the next five years, as a Reserve-man in civil life, he is entitled to draw 6d. per day, which is an addition not to be despised, to the wages which he may be earning as a civilian. Let a man's mental equilibrium be slightly upset within a few weeks of the expiration of his first period of service, by something which may remind him rather forcibly, that it will not do for him to

forget that he is under military discipline, and he at once makes a momentous decision, and then gives it vent in words in the hearing of all his comrades: "Oh, just let me once get a hold of that twenty-one quid, and here's out of it, even if I have to blister my hands outside."

Thus it comes to pass that one of the very advantages of the army, from another point of view, may be regarded as in the nature of a disadvantage. I have heard of men, who, finding out that they had made a bad bargain for themselves by exchanging the conditions of military service for the hard work and uncertain chances of civil life, would willingly have paid back their deferred pay, and rejoined the Colours from the Reserve, had they not already, to use their own phraseology, "blown the twenty-one quid," within a few weeks after receiving it. This deferred pay is an excellent thing in its way, and it would be a pity to see it abolished. If, however, the extra twopence a day, which is now banked for him during his first period of service, were added to the soldier's daily pay, and given to him weekly, the men on the whole would be better pleased, I should say, and certainly better off in every way. When he had finished his seven years, and elected to prolong his service by another five years to complete all twelve with the colours, then, and not before, would the deferred pay system work to full advantage to the soldier himself, and to the State

which he serves. In the meantime he should have earned good conduct money, which would recompense him for pay deferred during the second period of service. When he did receive deferred pay, accumulating for five years, he would have reached an age at which he could better appreciate the object for which it was intended, and would be more likely to make a good outlay with the sum received.¹ If I have the honour of numbering amongst my readers such an important individual as a real, live, British taxpayer, I can imagine to myself what

¹ I have heard an alternative plan, which would do much to put a stop to the actual loss to the Service caused by the present system of Deferred Pay and still have the additional advantage of being thoroughly in keeping with the good, general ideas of its originators. Let things remain as they are and give every man, as at present, his £21 on electing to go away, but, at the same time, let him have two or three months' leave, and let his actual transfer to the Reserve not take place until after the expiration of this period of grace. If still determined to abandon the active military career, after having made good use of his leave, and secured certain Employment in civil life, the man returns to his friends, probably in every respect improved, and with nothing but well-disposed feelings to the Service, which he has just quitted. He is a living advertisement of its real advantages, and favourably influences recruiting in his neighbourhood. If, on the other hand, he does not attain—perhaps, does not even seek to attain—a settled situation as a civilian, but spends his leave and money on personal enjoyment, he, on the expiration of the period, returns to the regiment with a keener appreciation of the advantages of the service, to which he still belongs, more contented than ever, and now determined to *soldier on* for a Pension. He, too, while enjoying himself on Leave, has a directly favourable influence on recruiting in his district, and his return to his regiment has a good effect on the young soldiers of his Barrack-room.

he will here exclaim :—" Oh, you are a soldier yourself, and have had peculiar opportunities for arriving at a fairly just opinion on a question of this kind ; how is it, that if it be, as you seem to represent, that the army is a really grand institution, erring even on the side of too numerous advantages, how is it that we are sick and tired of reading in the papers all kinds of complaints and grievances, and that it is being continually dinned into our unwilling ears that Conscription and all its attendant horrors will be soon upon us, if we do not put our hands into our pockets and remedy these grievances by adding to our soldiers' pay."

I have here pointed out, at some length, one aspect of our military service, which would be likely to interest the lay reader, and I hope I have been successful in proving from my small experience gained in the ranks, that our army can always be regarded in the light of a great educator and developer of latent qualities. I have never said that the bulk of our soldiers regard the service much from this point of view. These are *moral* advantages interesting to note, but Private Thomas Atkins, it is only fair to say, expects to see something more in the way of *material* advantages. In other words, he would not be disappointed if you added somewhat to the amount of hard cash which he receives. His physical powers may be frequently in process of development by route marches of ten or fifteen miles, and his mental training proceed *pari passu*

with the physical development in his daily drill exercises, and all this is very excellent and very interesting in result. It would do little good, however, to dwell too much upon these advantages in the barrack-room, and Private Thomas is not to be altogether blamed if he cannot, at the moment, see them in the light of blessings pure and simple. Many of the newspaper writers who gratuitously point out his grievances, to more or less sympathetic readers, understand very little indeed about him or his ways. He is an excellent fellow, indeed; he is very patient, and he is always willing to learn. This is the root of the whole matter. He is always learning, and he becomes somewhat tired of this. I have often said to men in the barrack-room, "Now just tell the truth, and you must acknowledge that you have better times of it in the service than you would have outside of it. Barring the cleaning up of your own barracks, you have nothing to do except what any *gentleman*, in the army or out of it, could do—only to learn, keep *learning*, and practising drill every day." Most of them will acknowledge that they are really better off in the army than outside it, in every respect, but—and the *but* is important—why could they not be better off still? "Look here, sergeant, it's true what you say right enough. If we was in civilian life we'd have a deal harder work to do with our hands, but then it's easy enough when you get accustomed to it. We mightn't perhaps have a

bit more to show after payin' our way than we have now, but then *we wouldn't expect more*, and we could please ourselves as to whether we spent money on titivatin' ourselves up or not. Here our hands is always white like ladies', but then they expect you to work a deal with yer head to make up like. In civilian life you haven't got to keep thinkin' what turn y'ul make here and what yer on there, and ye haven't got to be learnin' by heart almost twenty different orders on guard, and keep remindin' yerself that y'ul have to do so-and-so when So-and-So passes, and if such-and-such a thing happens, there is a very important thing you must attend to. It's perfectly true that we're quite as well off as half them civies that think they're better off than us—Lord pity their foolish 'eads—but then when them darned civilian chaps treat us as if we weren't worth nothing, and the young nippers in the street cry out, 'Left, left—left, right, left; we can buy as grand soldiers as you for a penny a box,' it's rather annoyin' ain't it? A bloke can't halt at the corner of the street and give a lecture on the advantages of the army and say, 'It's true that we only get a shilling a day, and we don't get every bit of that, but then we get quarters, reading rooms and newspapers, coal, light, and medical attendance free, which *you* don't have.' The truth of the matter is, that it is a fact, and it will have to be recognised as such, sooner or later, that the country lad has been educated

nolens volens into a much higher standard of life and living by the time that he blossoms forth as full Private Thomas Atkins, stalwart, erect and sprucely attired in the streets of the garrison towns. The money which sufficed for his wants, in apron and smock, in his remote country village, does not now go far enough to meet his increased and often imperative demands. John Bull, the excellent but grumbling taxpayer, will have to recognise that the private soldier is no longer to be classified with the unskilled labourer. The soldier in every way is and should be unquestionably superior, and he should be treated as such. Give him his full pay without stoppages, nay, increase that pay but *indirectly* by doubling the small sum allowed to the possessors of good conduct badges, thus enhancing discipline, and promoting steadiness, and let him have in ready cash, during his first seven years, the money now put away in bank, without much advantage to either him or the State. As for the non-commissioned officers, it should be an insult to compare any skilled artisan to them. They have really acquired a profession. They have, even as matters now stand, an appearance to keep up, both in and out of barracks, and the keeping up of this appearance is a necessary element in the maintenance of discipline amongst those who have to obey them. To adequately enable them to do this, to ensure continuance of their services at the very time when they have become most

valuable, their pay should be increased. It is true that when everything is reckoned up that the sergeant's pay is even, perhaps, now equal to that of the skilled artisan or the miserable clerk. The sergeant, however, has really more knowledge, is altogether more highly trained, and has much greater responsibilities in times of peace or war.

Would the excellent Mr Bull be a loser in the end if he did spend a trifle more on his small army? I should imagine not. If all his young men are forced in time, owing to increased difficulty in obtaining suitable recruits, to leave their various productive civil occupations to undergo a period of military service, he will be a decided loser, greatest European *producer* as he is—a loser in a way which he cannot well afford.

In any case it is interesting to note that whether conscription is eventually ordained or not, the army can always be regarded as a great educator of men and citizens, and a great *possible* good instead of a standing scourge.

Is not the work of *education* classed now by political economists as *productive* labour? If it is, then the army may deserve well of the State, on grounds actually independent of its great and main work of defending that State, when in danger.¹ Will the time ever arrive when the

¹ Self-respect and self-contentment must be great factors in military efficiency. Would not the prestige of a 'professional army offering increased advantages to those electing to serve in it, be greater than that of an army raised by conscription? Are Frenchmen *individually* proud of their great, glorious, but miserably underpaid and slovenly attired soldiers?—Query, very much query.

British citizen, who not so long ago looked upon the soldier as of necessity belonging to the scum of the nation, is prepared to say that this small standing army of his is an institution to be proud of on all grounds, and not a necessary evil? When that day arrives it will be found that there will be actual competition for entrance, even into the ranks of our army, which will be kept up to its standard of men with the same ease as it is now kept up to its standard of officers. I do not mean by *competition* the passing of any absurd and unnecessary examination; the competition which I allude to, will be the selection from sufficiently numerous applicants for admission of the best in previous character and in present physique. In the meantime, as a soldier, if I have succeeded to any extent in interesting my possible readers in the soldiers, whose lot it is at duty's call to subject themselves to the hardships attendant on a long voyage by sea, and to sail away in the interests of the Empire they belong to, to a distant land where unknown dangers of climate must to some extent await them, I shall not be sorry for having here digressed to a considerable extent. I may here point out, though, that these very hardships and dangers have a certain fascination for many men, and to my

If so, how comes it that French students always speak with accents of horror of their approaching *volontariat*—strange term to use thus—and shudder as they see themselves in imagination blue-coated *pousse-cailloux*, looking anything but glorious on the Boulevard. What price *La Gloire* then?

mind the opportunity of seeing, at the State's expense and in its service, these distant lands may be even counted amongst the advantages of the army. Once more recurring to the educational aspect of the matter as being likely to interest more directly the ordinary lay reader, could not this very sailing over the seas to distant lands, and making acquaintance with the great dependencies and colonies of the Empire, be regarded as a not altogether unworthy equivalent *under the circumstances* for the *grand tour* of the past century? By making the actual advantages at present afforded by the army and the actual conditions of service of our soldiers more generally understood by the public at large, the more chance there is that the soldiers themselves will appreciate them.

During the long, long miles of water, and the lengthening days when sailing across the Indian Ocean with little or nothing to see or describe, such questions often came to my mind, and I succeeded in passing many a dull hour off duty away by long chats with soldiers, sailors and marines, in which I tried to extract from the men themselves direct opinions as to the subjects which mainly interested them—otherwise I have little to chronicle. When within one day's sail of India, we had the mournful opportunity of witnessing a funeral at sea. The young wife of one of our sergeants died somewhat suddenly. The funeral ceremony was very impressive. The body covered

up in canvas, enveloped in the Union Jack, when the chaplain, reading the prayers on the quarter-deck, had reached the appropriate passage, dropped swiftly and silently into the sea. There was something so mournfully striking about the words, "In the midst of Life we are in Death," read there on that one spot in the ship, where all our attempts during the voyage to add to the pleasure, and relieve the dulness of the troopship life, had been made, and where the very evening before we had had one of our impromptu concerts! How striking also on the occasion was the verse which speaks of the day to come, when the sea would be called upon to give up all its dead! Will it give up its dead secrets as well as its dead bodies? What secrets of life and death must this great Indian Ocean here at its far side have witnessed! What individual hopes and fears and ambitions for the morrow, when the great Indian Empire would be first made visible, from the days of Clive and Warren Hastings to our own! What long voyage love-making and flirtations on P. and O. boats and troopships must be finally settled one way or the other at this spot, where likewise wives rejoining husbands left behind to toil beneath Indian suns, and children, fresh from English schools, their almost forgotten parents, are thinking of the morrow! We soldiers are thinking too. For us it is the end in one way, and but the beginning of the end in more ways than one.

CHAPTER V.

THE FAR SIDE.

Wednesday, 7th January 1891.

ANCHORED early this morning in Bombay Harbour. Moon still well up. Hills away on our starboard side, beyond the right boundary of the harbour; hills again, directly to our front, immediately behind a forest of shipping. On the port-side, across the broad expanse of water, an uninteresting-looking long line of factory-like buildings and smoking chimneys—with, here and there, a church and a few palm-trees—the latter looking rather out of place. Nothing Oriental about the scene, with the one exception of the native boats, dotting the water around us, with their dusky oarsmen, lightly clad in white, and turbaned as to their heads.

They go far to convince us that we really have arrived at the Far Side, and that the hills across the water are in India—distant, much-talked-of India—the biggest of all our drill-grounds. The sun now begins to add its testimony, and soon becomes a rather strong witness. Little by little the convincing process is completed, and we feel

sure that we have arrived. The day breaks and the small boats begin to move. They come near to us, but not so near as in the case of the Maltese or Arabs. When they do summon up courage to paddle in somewhat close, to us, a police-boat, manned by uniformed black men, scuds across the water and away go the unlicensed traders, rowing for their very lives. A ship's corporal with some blue-jackets chases one venturesome native boat and gradually gains on it. 'He lets out right and left with a substantial stick at the bare-backed "niggers." Without any attempt at retaliation, they suddenly abandon their small craft, and, "chancing" the crocodiles, disappear into the water. The dominant Europeans, satisfied for the time, pull about and return to the ship, and the two black forms suddenly reappear above the surface, and, swimming a few strokes, regain their boat.

Now some of the privileged natives appear on board, and soon one comes across all sorts and conditions of black men in the most unlikely corners of the ship. They fully represent Hindostan. A Hindoo milkman, with his brass jar or *chatti* on his turbaned head, is parading barefooted up and down the forecastle, crying "Dudh ! Milk, goode milk !" Huntingdon quietly approaches him, and the Hindoo lowers the *chatti*, and squatting down on the ground, prepares to measure out. My study in batmen, however, does not believe, it seems, in milk. I am rather curious to know what Huntingdon is going to say to the

native ; so I edge in, unperceived, and get near enough to hear. The squatting Hindoo fixes his gaze on the soldier, expecting an order ; Huntingdon coolly chucks him under the chin and says, "Look 'ere, what have I done to you that yer lookin' so black at me for?" Highly pleased at this effort of wit, he then walks away, and the Hindoo unconcernedly turns his black face in the opposite direction and renews his invitations to the soldier-sahibs to buy his *dudh*.

A little distance down the gangway stands a Parsee money-changer. He is a shade lighter in complexion than the Hindoo ; and, but for the towering cone of a Parsee hat he wears, is dressed almost as a European. The soldiers treat him with considerable deference as a man of money, and he seems to treat them with justice. He is giving them fourteen rupees and twelve annas for every British sovereign. All the men, strange to say, seem to have some money. They have had two pay-days on the voyage out ; and the majority, I believe, had been saving up for some time before leaving Malta, thus clearly proving that they had well learnt the lesson taught them by their experiences on the first trip. The Parsee seems to take each man's word as to the precise amount presented for exchange. Without counting shillings or sixpences, he spills the British coins into a large leather bag, and, dipping his hand into another, serves out the Indian equivalents with amazing rapidity. On the waste-deck, just below the ladder

leading to the upper deck, sits a fruit-seller. He is, it appears, a Mahomedan; and he is so intensely occupied soliciting custom and receiving coppers—Indian and British—for his tempting bananas, that I stand close behind him for nearly five minutes and succeed in almost finishing a rough sketch of him.

To the right, just inside the sailors' mess-deck, stands a group of marines and blue-jackets, whose great occupation in life for the time being is the swallowing, in *quick time*, of small plates of ice-cream, bought from a prosperous-looking native in the centre. Away in the corner sits a sailor, who looks somewhat nervous, with the left side of his face beneath the razor of a black barber. By ten o'clock, however, a great change has taken place on board, and all the natives, with one or two respectable exceptions, have disappeared. The soldiers are down in the troop-deck, getting ready their arms and accoutrements, with the new white Indian helmets, with which they have just now been served out, on their heads. The blue-jackets are working very hard all over the ship. There is a great deal of hard heaving, accompanied by much shouting, as the field-officers' horses are being got off on to the steam-launch, which has just come up alongside us. The horses, taken from their stalls on the waste-deck, and hoisted up in the air to a height of probably forty feet directly over the quarter-deck, look really more puzzled than frightened. The Indian sun seems to be having its effect

on them too, and they are getting too lazy even to neigh, much less to kick.

Within another two hours, we two-legged animals in white helmets and red coats, each with rifle in hand, begin to file on to another launch. As the Blankford Light Infantry steam across the harbour of Bombay, away from the good old ship *Malamer*, which has safely brought them, within the past twelve months, over the seas to a distance of no less than 6,300 miles from their quiet English Midland homes, the ship's crew from the upper deck wave adieus. Old "Tin Gear," a particularly energetic warrant officer in charge of the main troop deck, who occasionally found it his painful duty to talk like a father to youthful, and somewhat too thoughtless soldiers, within his temporary jurisdiction, is waving an abnormally large handkerchief. He is reported to have said a few minutes ago, that he—please emphasise the *he*—had never brought out a better conducted, nicer lot of men than the Blankfords, so the Blankfords in their launch below, after some preliminary discussion amongst themselves, as to whether he was altogether deserving of the ovation, decide upon showing him that he is not such a bad kind of bloke after all, and rising, as one man, to their feet, loudly call for "Three cheers for Tin Gear."

Then the spirit moves them to cheer for the goat, and the pet of the *Malamer*, by way of manifesting her pleasure, begins to caress with her horns the legs of the carpenter's mate who is holding her.

By one o'clock we find ourselves actually landed in Hindostan. For two hours more we remain in the large shed at the Sassoon Docks. When the heat of the day has somewhat subsided, we are to begin the first stage of the long, long journey by land, which follows that by sea. Meantime, there is no reason why we should not have something to eat, and we get it from the native boys, who stand behind the counter of the refreshment-stall in the shed. How polite these particular natives are! What excellent, self-possessed manners! They speak in such soft, indolent, but too effeminate accents; and strange to say, without one exception, they are decidedly good-looking. I think these new soldier-wallahs fresh from the sea, must be profitable customers. The Blankford men seem determined to try all kinds of cheap luxuries, and they are all inwardly doubtful as to whether they are getting their correct change or not. Many of them do not even yet know that there are actually no less than sixteen copper annas to a silver rupee, and not twelve, just as there are twelve pence to an English shilling. To acknowledge, however, that they could be "dusted over," even within the first hour, by a native, would be to display a lamentable want of *flyness* on their parts, and this, in the case of men who have had already a year's foreign service in the Mediterranean, and who, in spite of their youthful appearances, are now nearly all entitled to their badges, would be simply disastrous. I am quietly approached by one or two privates of my Company,

who ask me in a stage whisper, if they have got their right change out of sundry eight anna, four anna and two anna silver pieces, but as none of them seem quite clear as to how many pice each article was priced at, it is impossible for me to answer satisfactorily. I guarantee, however, that before his first pay-day in India arrives next week, every Blankford Briton amongst them will be able to tell his colour-sergeant exactly what he is entitled to, and be correct within a pice or two. In a very short time, too, I fear, they will be bestowing more kicks than half-pence upon the *Nappies* or natives barbers, who, judging from the pleasant expression of their features all round, are now reaping a harvest of coppers beneath this wooden roof. A sentry of the Gloucester Regiment, who looks so cool, in spite of his sun-burnt face, in his spotlessly white linen uniform, is just informing a few of the Blankfords, that barbers are included amongst the paid native followers of the regiment, and that they will travel across India with us to the Punjaub, it being their duty, henceforth, to shave, between them, every man in the regiment, every day of his soldier-life in India, without any further charge than the two annas per month paid by each man through his accounts.

Shortly after three the train comes puffing up alongside the shed, and after some preliminary forming up and moving to the right in file, right wheeling, halting, fronting, and standing at ease, we are told off, ten men under a non-commissioned

officer, to each railway carriage. Then after *judging a pause*, as they say in the drill-book, the train moves off in *its own time*, which is not precisely *quick*. As we, rolling on in the dusk, pass by some of the handsome Bombay buildings, already lit up, and catch passing glimpses of stylish carriages driving along a well-paved road, the soldiers, in a fit of enthusiasm, declare that this *is* a place just like England, in fact. They are ever patriotic these defenders of the empire! What care they about the ancient civilisation of the east or the native wonders of Hindostan? Give them a few two-storied brick-and-mortar houses and a regularly paved street, and the thoughts which these things conjure up—thoughts of English beer within easy reach, and buxom English lasses, in whose admiring eyes, their caps have not been cut down in vain, nor ribbons, to no purpose lengthened, and the glories of the new and strange land from the time of the Great Mogul to now, pale away to utter insignificance! Blankford apples, too, are really better any day than bananas, and mangoes are only *rum* things, after all! There is nothing in them, when you've eaten them. Slightly changing the words, the sentiments expressed by the King in the *Pirates of Penzance* are ours too.

“It's true we live by strife,
And are always ready to begin it,
And all we ask is life,
Without too much poetry in it.”

Oh, Prose of Sir Edwin Arnold! Oh, Truth and

Poetry! Oh, What-is and What-isn't! If ever, in the whirligig of time, I chance to come face to face with the author of the *Light of Asia*, I shall tell him that I felt much annoyed with him, as we sped through the Indian night from Bombay to Deolali. I was uncomfortable—we were all so in our crowded carriages, but we expected this. We did not, however, expect to shiver with the cold. Two days ago, I had read some *Notes of a Tour through India*, in which Sir Edwin, after committing himself to the statement that, “the Indian January may be called perfect,” goes on to say that, “the days will be steadily and splendidly bright, and the nights *deliciously tepid*.” This night was not tepid but *frigid* rather, to us, after our twelve months in Malta, and our recent experience of the increasing heat on the voyage out here. As we huddled together—soldiers, sea-kit bags, black bags, rifles, and valises—we craved for warmth almost as much as space. There was no sleep that night. At half past three this winter's morning, we stepped out into the darkness at Deolali Station. Forms black as night, with white teeth chattering with the cold, flitted about proclaiming themselves as coolies, and offering to carry our bags for us to the camp. We were loth to trust them, however, and on we jogged for nearly twenty minutes. How we succeeded in reaching at last the large white tents, with all our *impedimenta* still in our possession, I am still puzzled to know.

Thursday, 8th January 1891.

So this is Deolali after all. Many a time and oft since my military ardour led me to enlist into the ranks of the Blankfords, have I heard the, as yet, untravelled recruit, speak wonderingly of this piece of Indian earth and of the Great Unknown, who dwells here, the heartless bestower of taps both harmless and severe.

If the night was cold, the day is hot here. The heat glow seems to rise perceptibly from the ground and steadily ascend between the tents, themselves pleasantly cool inside. We have had three or four hours' sleep, and have slept well in spite of the yelping of pariah dogs, and the howling of the jackals round the camp at night. Now all is still. This is really and truly India. There is, at first, something seductively attractive about everything here; the very Indian heat, just now, seems enjoyable rather than otherwise. [It makes one feel so utterly lazy, though—ready, on bare suggestion of the thought, to lie down for ever and dream the rest of one's life away. The very Bhistie or water-carrier, who passes with the bullocks by the tents, to fill his leather-bags down there at the well, walks beside his beasts, as if he agreed completely with them, that it was really a matter of indifference, as to whether he and they reached the well to-day or to-morrow. There are a lot of Khaki-clad European soldiers straying about from tent to tent, looking for possible chums in the new regiment from home. These men are all time-expired, and waiting

here at Deolali for vacant berths on the homeward-bound troopships. They are really fine specimens of soldiers, well set-up, seasoned, and matured, with faces deeply bronzed. There is something, too, very quiet, and self-contained, about their demeanour. Beside the new-comers they look as if they really did realise the high part they have been playing in distant corners of this great Hindostan, guarding the outskirts of the Empire, over which the sun never sets, for the men, women, and children, who now sit by fires, secure at home. The soldiers' desire to be *fly*, however, has not died away even in them. "What cheer, chums? Welcome to India! You like it, do you? S'truth when you've had as much of it as I've had, I reckon you'll be about fed up with it. Howsomever, there's worse places than India, an' there's no soldierin like Indian soldierin'. It's not for me to say anything against the country. Let me see now, it's a matter of six years, come next month, since the *Jumna* carried me and many another good man out here. I've been waiting here now nearly two months time-discharged for a passage on a Trooper, but, b'lieve me, I'm off in earnest next week. Reckon I'll find things a bit strange when I get home again. Do they still speak English in England, eh? *Kya mangte ho—what do you want?*" (this last to a native, who suddenly comes in upon the group salaaming with both hands), "*Ja you suar. Ja!* Well, as I was sayin'—Oh yes, I've never known a day's illness in this country. Look here, chums, there's

two golden rules for health in India." All this is said with a patronising air of superiority. He is not asked directly what these rules are, but as the younger soldiers say nothing, and look towards him, he volunteers the information. "First rule—never wear no cholera-belts; second rule—drink anything you can get, more if you can get it.

"There's another good rule, too, and you might add it to the others: always do exactly the contrary to what the doctors tell you. If you pay any attention to what they say, as sure as I'm a livin' time-expired man, you'll die of cholera in a daft ward afore yer six months in the country. Oh, I beg your pardon, sergeant, 'scuse me, I didn't see yer; I'm just givin' a few straight tips to some of the youngsters here." This last remark this doughty Anglo-Indian warrior addressed to me, with an accompanying look, which plainly said, "I know you will caution them against taking gratuitous advice of this kind."

Our men now begin to roam about the place, as if they had been in India for years, and wanted no advice from anybody. Some of them have already picked up some Hindustani words and phrases. This morning, after the substantial meat-breakfast, which every European soldier gets in India, at every tent-door might be seen a Blankford man, with hand extended, beckoning to passing sellers of various commodities. "*Hay, Makan-wallah, Idhar ao Jaldi,*" "*dudh-wallah, O Dudh-wallah!*"

In my tent there are two coolies, hard at work

cleaning the soldiers' boots; a very diminutive Hindoo, of some six or seven summers, completely innocent of clothing, is sitting between two of our men. He is giving them elementary lessons in Hindustani.

"Hey, Jumbo, what do you call that?"

"Dat *chhurri*, knife; dat *khanta*, fork."

He demands *roti* (bread) after every word he tells them, and he has already earned a loaf and a half. This he has tied round and round with a long strip of linen, which would seem to have escaped wetting at the time of the deluge,¹ and to have remained *in statu quo* ever since. For security's sake he is sitting on the whole. The soldiers willingly part with the bread, for they have taken a strange fancy to this whimsical Hindoo mite, and they are anxious to learn of him. Once more the educatory process—this time clearly visible in all its parts—at a new stage of development! A tall, dignified-looking native suddenly appears at the door and asks for the sergeant-sahib. I go out.

"Salaam, sahib!"

"Salaam."

"You want bearer—me do everything. Sack batman, take me. Sodger-man no use here; too hot for him—*both garam*. Me clean straps, but-

¹ I am very much afraid that I am guilty of an anachronism here. I suppose the antediluvians wore no linen. I do not know when it was first manufactured, and there are no books of reference within my reach here. Let it pass.

tons, boots, look after your clothes, go everywhere with you, do whatever master likes. Only five rupees a month—good *chitties*—look, plenty good character—*dekho*."

I look at him.

"Salaam!"

"What are you salaaming about now?"

"Me forget something; me say five rupees! Maybe master give more, then me work more for master. Sodger-man in that tent *udher* say to me that master plenty rich; you *rajah*?"

"Look here, I'd much *rajah*,¹ you didn't talk to me like that. Don't, please; you mustn't believe everything sodger-man say; sometimes sodger-man talk rot. What's the Hindustani for *rot*, eh?"

"Sahib, me no *malum*. Well, me go bearer to sahib—five rupees a month. If master please, he give more; if master no please, me say, all same: *both acha*, very well."

Out of a fold of his modern toga he takes a bundle of papers and hands them to me for my inspection. They are testimonials as to past services and character, and he is very proud of them. The first one reads thus:—

¹ A sense of justice to others and, perhaps, also to myself, compels me to admit, with no great reluctance, that the above *jeu d'esprit* is not original. I have heard it perpetrated behind the footlights, amidst prolonged howling and cries of "Turn him out," on the part of the British audience, by one *Punka, Rajah of Chutneypore*, in the *Nautch Girl*, an *Indian Comic Opera*.

"Ali Baba served me as bearer, for the three days, which I lately spent in Deolali Camp. During that time, I invariably found him most irregular in his habits, and his honesty is more than doubtful.

(Signed) "J. J. J. JUGGINS,
"Brigade-Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel."

I went out for a stroll. On the summit of one of the hills, which encircle the camp here, was a temple, picturesquely placed and built. After walking through the bazaar or native village of mud and wooden huts, in which I noticed that "Europe (*sic*) lemonad'" was extensively advertised, I made for the Hill of the Temple. All along I felt myself shadowed, and at this point I turned round to see by whom. It was the tall, dignified-looking native, Ali Baba. In a few quick steps he was by my side.

"Sahib look at temple? No order go there. Sahib must stay down here, but me tell sahib all, and show sahib everything." Here he proceeded to enumerate a variety of things which it was in his power to show me at a moment's notice; but, seeing that my attention was still riveted on the Temple on the Hill, he began to lecture on the subject of my thoughts.

"That the Temple of Khunderao, Hindoo god. One thousand year and more he sit there on the hill, all alone by himself. Very great god, and plenty fat fellow!" (At this point he made a semi-circular sweep with both hands direct to his

front, presumably by way of conveying to me a more or less just idea of the present proportions of the divine form.)

"He have nothing to do but eat, and people bring him plenty *khana*."

In a whisper, accompanied by a knowing wink or two, he intimated to me that the god, being a creature of wood, devoid of all human appetites, did not himself consume the *khana*, but that this was done for him by the devoted Brahmin who attended on the shrine. Here was this man actually endeavouring at this juncture to show his *flyness*. What a small world and a large human nature!

"Sahib know some black man—plenty fool—believe anything—plenty stupid."

I could stand it no longer. He had taken to ridiculing an important section of his own countrymen to curry favour with a European just landed.

"Ali Baba," I said, trying to stare him into shame, "Ali Baba, man of noble presence and unimpeachable character.—*vide* testimonials—*ja!* *jaldi ja!* *ja ek dum!*"¹

¹ Go; quickly go! go at once! (*ek dum*, literally, *one breath*). These, and some other half-dozen useful words, heard on all sides of one, are learned by the soldier before he has been two hours in India; *ja* is the imperative of the verb *jana*, to go. In all our dealings with the inhabitants of this vast country, the imperative is the mood most needed, pity though it be, and by some happy dispensation, the imperative is also the root of all Hindustani verbs.

THE FAR SIDE.

He looked puzzled, but there was no mistake in the tone with which that *Ja* was delivered, nor the look which accompanied its deliverance.

He went.

Fifty yards or so to the right of me were half a-dozen soldiers—Blankford men—sitting in a group. They were happy—happy in the strong sun and the strange scene, and the consciousness that, though it was still true that they had before them a journey of over one thousand five hundred miles across India—even to the very frontier of Afghanistan—they had, at any rate, now left the sea a clear twenty-four hours behind them in the march of events. They were thinking mainly of the present, and they were singing “Little Annie Rooney” beneath the Temple of the God.

THE END.

